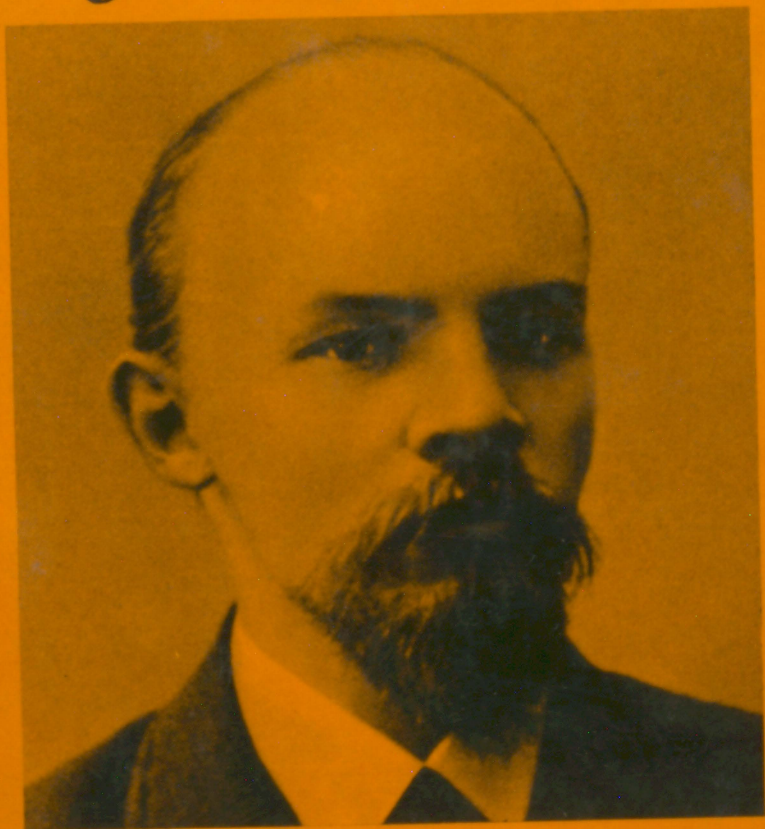


Lenin and the Leagues of Struggle



PROGRESS Publishers



V. I. Lenin

Lenin and the Leagues of Struggle

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PROGRESS Publishers

Moscow

Translated from the Russian by *Lilia Nakhapetyan*
and *Lyudmila Lezhneva*

В. И. ЛЕНИН И «СОЮЗЫ БОРЬБЫ»

Руководитель авторского коллектива *А. Ф. Костин*

На английском языке

C-87736

© Политиздат, 1978

English translation of the revised Russian text

© Progress Publishers 1983

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

$\frac{10103-148}{014(01)-83}$ 34-83

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FOREWORD

The book portrays events which took place in the Russian workers' movement at the turn of the 20th century and which were closely connected with the revolutionary activities of Lenin and the Social-Democratic organisations he led.

These events have greatly influenced the course of history; they were the starting point of that glorious path mapped out by Lenin, which led to victory in the arduous struggle to eliminate the bourgeois-landlord system in Russia and construct the world's first socialist society.

At the turn of this century, few could have foreseen that the establishment of Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class would mark the beginning of a new, proletarian stage in Russia's revolutionary history. Lenin was the only one who clearly foresaw that great changes were imminent in Russia, that the nation was becoming a foremost contingent of the world liberation movement. It was this science-based prediction that generated the enormous intellectual energy, which Lenin devoted without reserve to organising the Russian proletariat into an independent political party capable of leading the working people's struggle to abolish landlord and capitalist oppression and achieve social and national liberation.

The present book is based on wide-ranging historical and literary sources and its aim is to fill in some of the gaps in the historiography on this subject with new facts and conclusions. The authors have gathered together a wealth of documentary evidence and research material pertaining to the history of the workers' movement and Marxism in Russia from Lenin's arrival in St. Petersburg in 1893 up to the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party

(RSDLP) in 1898. The following key problems are examined in detail:

- Lenin's criticism of liberal Narodism and legal Marxism and his defence and elaboration of the three component parts of Marxism — dialectical and historical materialism, political economy and scientific socialism;
- Lenin's development of the concept of the hegemony of the proletariat and his definition of the urgent tasks facing the Russian Social-Democrats;
- the work done by the St. Petersburg and other Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class to bring about the merger of scientific socialism and the mass workers' movement, and to establish the party;
- the First Party Congress and its historical significance.

Marxist-Leninist theory has been treated in its organic connection with revolutionary practice. Numerous facts and documents have been cited to show that during the 1890s the Russian Social-Democratic organisations concentrated all their practical activities on: 1) the dissemination of Marxism among the workers' masses; 2) leadership of the proletarian strike movement; and 3) the establishment of an independent proletarian organisation.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to preparations for the First (inaugural) RSDLP Congress, which, on Lenin's initiative, was convoked by the St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and other Leagues of Struggle. This congress was an important landmark in the history of Russian Social-Democracy, which relied upon the mass working-class movement that emerged during the 1890s. "The formation of the Party in the spring of 1898," said Lenin, "was the most striking ... act of the Social-Democrats of this period."*

The issues analysed in the book are of both historical-cognitive and socio-political interest. Many bourgeois historians try to distort the revolutionary past of the Land of

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 518.—
Ed.

Soviets by presenting it in a negative light. They are not in the least disturbed by their responsibility before history, even when falsely alleging that progressive Russian workers were hostile to Marxism and shunned the "dull" working masses, being concerned only with improving their own social status.* However, it is a well-known fact that, following the appearance of Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group in 1883, the progressive members of the workers' movement in Russia had been steadily drawing closer to the Social-Democratic intelligentsia and mastering the ideas of Marx and Engels. In the latter half of the 1890s the Leagues of Struggle launched, apart from lecturing in small study circles, agitation among the masses, as a result of which the Social-Democrats effectively merged with the workers' movement and became its political leaders. "The strikes of 1895-96 had already given rise to a mass working-class movement, which both in ideas and organisation was linked with the Social-Democratic movement," Lenin wrote.**

Another false idea put forward by Sovietologists is that there existed "contradictions" between progressive workers and the rank and file. The fact is that the Western bourgeoisie has succeeded in splitting the working class by bribing the part of it and creating the so-called workers' aristocracy in their countries. The entire history of the workers' movement in Russia, on the contrary, vividly demonstrates that Russian progressive workers always tried to come closer to the proletarian masses and raise them to the level of revolutionary struggle.

True, some bourgeois historians have been compelled to recognise that Lenin and his supporters played an outstanding role in the evolution of the Social-Democratic working-class movement in the 1890s. However, they do not "venture" to objectively describe the activities of Russian Marxists-

* See, for example, *Vladimir Akimov on the Dilemmas of Russian Marxism, 1895-1903*, transl. and ed. by G. Frankel, Cambridge, 1969, p. 26.—Ed.

** V. I. Lenin, "Disruption of Unity under Cover of Outcries for Unity", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 343.—Ed.

Leninists, who initiated the fusion of the theory of scientific socialism with the mass workers' movement. Instead, they dedicate their "studies" to the "failures" and "shortcomings" of the Leagues of Struggle and extol the opportunist position taken by the Economists, who stood in awe of the "spontaneity" in the workers' movement.* Historical accuracy, as we see, is not a strong point with bourgeois authors.

The best method of exposing bourgeois falsification is an examination of the issues involved in Party history undertaken on the basis of authentic data. This was the main task the authors of this book set themselves in analysing this crucial, but poorly studied period in the history of the Russian revolutionary liberation movement.

The last decade of the 19th century is an important period in the history of the CPSU; it was during these years that Lenin and his followers launched their successful struggle against the ideology of the liberal Narodniks and legal Marxists, an ideology alien to the working class, and also against nascent opportunism and revisionism in the ranks of Social-Democrats, and worked to establish a new-type revolutionary party — the Party of the Bolsheviks.

* * *

The book is a collective effort by: I. A. Aluf, A. F. Kostin, D. G. Kutsentov, R. I. Markova, A. I. Sereda, F. M. Suslova and A. T. Yurchenko.

Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Lenin's works are taken from the English edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* in 45 volumes, prepared by Progress Publishers, Moscow.

* Ascher A., *Pavel Axelrod and the Development of Menshevism*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1972, p. 128; Wildman A., *The Making of a Workers' Revolution. Russian Social Democracy. 1891-1903*, Chicago-London, 1967, p. 82.— Ed.

Chapter One

THE BEGINNING OF THE LENINIST STAGE OF MARXISM

The liberation movement in Russia has passed through three stages, led by the nobility, the *raznochintsy** and the proletariat respectively. The workers' movement emerged and gained momentum during the second stage, which began after the abolition of serfdom in 1861. At first it was a spontaneous protest against oppression by autocracy and capital, but gradually it became more organised.

The period following the abolition of serfdom in Russia was characterised by rapid capitalist development. By the end of the 1870s, Russia had in the main completed the change from small-scale manufacture to large-scale capitalist industry. The number of large enterprises increased by fifty per cent over the last three decades of the 19th century.

Thus the foundation had been created for the growth of the industrial proletariat, which began to organise as a class on a national scale. Between 1865 and 1890 the number of workers employed at works and factories, and in mining and transport enterprises had doubled. By the 1890s, there were about 10 million wage workers in Russia, of which more than 1.5 million were employed in factories, mining enterprises and railways, about 3.5 million in agriculture, and about one million in construction.** Russia was ahead of advanced capitalist countries in terms of the growth rate and concentration of the industrial proletariat. In 1890, 71.1 per cent of all factory workers were employed at large enterprises (employing 100 and more workers).

* "Men of various estates"—the Russian commoner—intellectuals, drawn from small townfolk, the clergy, the merchant classes, the peasantry, as distinct from those from the nobility.— *Ed.*

** See V. I. Lenin, "The Development of Capitalism in Russia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 581-82.— *Ed.*

The workers' movement began to develop as an independent component part of the Russian liberation movement from the 1870s onwards, with strikes as the principal form of the proletarian struggle. The class solidarity of the working masses increased, and the first outstanding proletarian revolutionary leaders and organisers appeared — Vasily Gerasimov, Pyotr Alexeyev, Victor Obnorsky, Stepan Khalturin, Pyotr Moiseyenko, and others. And even if the proletariat was only arising from its slumbers, its "foremost representatives ... revealed themselves ... as great leaders of the workers' democratic movement".*

It was these vanguard representatives of the working class who initiated the practice of adding political to economic demands, and who inaugurated the trend towards an alliance with the socialist workers' movement of Western Europe. Workers' Leagues began to appear, the first organisations of the Russian working class to aim at achieving political freedom. The workers took their own path of struggle, quite distinct from that of the Narodniks**; and the credit for this must be given largely to their best representatives.

In 1875 the first workers' organisation — the South Russian League of Workers — was founded in Odessa. It adopted some of the provisions contained in the documents of the First International and proclaimed that a revolution was necessary in order to abolish the privileges of the ruling classes and liberate the workers from oppression by capital. In December, 1878, the Northern League of Workers was organised in St. Petersburg. In its programme it emphasised that "the entire strength and significance" of the country consisted in the proletariat, and it also declared that the goals of the League

* V. I. Lenin, "Before and Now", *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 302.— *Ed.*

** *Narodism* — an ideological movement among the *raznochintsy* intelligentsia at the bourgeois-democratic stage of the liberation movement in Russia (1861—1895). The Narodniks expressed the interests of the peasantry and opposed serfdom and capitalist development in Russia, seeing the way out in a peasant commune. In the late 1880s Narodism lost its revolutionary character and adopted a largely liberal position.—*Ed.*

were very similar to those of the "Social-Democratic parties of the West".

The ideology of the first workers' organisations was transitional in the sense that they were moving away from the Narodnik position but had not yet adopted Marxist ideology. "No matter what," Georgy Plekhanov wrote, "the future historian of the revolutionary movement in Russia will have to note that in the seventies the demand for political freedom appeared in the workers' programme earlier than in the programmes of the revolutionary intelligentsia. This demand brought the Northern League of Workers close to the West European workers' parties."^{*}

The 1880s saw a new upsurge in the workers' movement. The first big strikes took place in the Central industrial area. The official press described a strike at Morozov's textile mills as "a link in the colossal chain of the workers' movement that has recently locked in Russian factories and affected practically every industrial centre". That decade witnessed the shift in advanced revolutionary thought in Russia from utopian peasant socialism to Marxism, and the Narodniks lost their dominant position in the Russian liberation movement. In 1883 Plekhanov formed abroad the Emancipation of Labour group, the first Russian Social-Democratic organisation. Subsequently, a number of Marxist study circles and groups also appeared in Russia, led by D. Blagoyev, P. Tochisky, N. Fedoseyev, and others. Russian Social-Democrats had emerged on the scene.

This was the "gestational" period of Russian Social-Democracy when it still constituted only an ideological trend. As a rule, the first Social-Democrats were only active in the groups and study circles, thus limiting themselves to propagation of Marxism among a limited number of revolutionary-minded intellectuals and progressive workers.

By the mid-1890s the Marxist Social-Democratic trend had taken firm root in Russia. However, Social-Democracy and the workers' movement were developing independently of each other, and as a result both of them were weak. After 1895,

^{*} Georgy Plekhanov, *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 186 (in Russian).—Ed.

a new, proletarian stage of the liberation movement began, and the workers' movement became a mass phenomenon. The merger of scientific socialism with the massive workers' movement and the organisation and consolidation of the workers' movement on the basis of Marxism became a priority. "In the nineties," wrote Lenin, "two profound social movements converged in Russia: one, a spontaneous movement, a popular movement within the working class, the other, the movement of social thought in the direction of the theory of Marx and Engels, towards the theory of Social-Democracy".*

The start of the proletarian stage of the liberation movement in Russia is inseparably linked with the name of Lenin. While an objective process of capitalist development prepared the way for a mass workers' movement, Lenin's theoretical activities laid the ideological foundations for a revolutionary proletarian party.

Lenin was engaged in his multifaceted theoretical and practical activities at a time when the West was experiencing a relatively "peaceful" period of capitalist development, while in Russia a huge wave of popular revolution was gathering momentum. This revolution was destined to occur under more mature social relations than any previous, bourgeois revolution, and to have an unprecedented impact on the subsequent course of the world liberation movement.

By the end of the 19th century Marxism had won decisive victories over such alien trends, such as Proudhonism, Bakuninism and other varieties of petty-bourgeois socialism, and had become the prevailing ideology in the world workers' movement. Its triumph compelled the adversaries of Marxism to change their tactics and resort to covert attacks disguised as Marxists. "Liberalism, rotten within, tried to revive itself in the form of socialist *opportunism*," wrote Lenin.**

From the 1890s onwards, the struggle against trends hostile

* V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 260.—*Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx", *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 584.—*Ed.*

to Marxism was waged within Marxism itself. Foreseeing sharp class battles between labour and capital, opportunists and revisionists tried to falsify Marxism, deprive the proletariat of its ideological weapon, and push it on to the road of reformism and "social peace" with the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions, the proletariat was faced with two main tasks. first, that of defending revolutionary Marxism against opportunist distortions and promoting its creative evolution in accordance with trends manifest in socio economic and political life, and secondly, that of organising a proletarian party of a new type, consistently revolutionary and implacable towards opportunism and dogmatism.

It was to these tasks that Lenin now turned his attention. His theoretical genius combined an analysis of events in Russia with an analysis of the trends in world social development. By this time Russia had become a component part of the world capitalist system, with all its inherent contradictions. As a result, Lenin's ideas and conclusions were of a universal nature, expressed the interests of the working class and all working people, and were consonant with the spirit and requirements of the new era. They enriched ideologically the proletarian liberation movement and the theory and practice of the class struggle, and marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of Marxism.

Lenin fought an uncompromising battle against anti-Marxist views and trends, while creatively developing the teaching formulated by Marx and Engels and summing up the experience gained by the world liberation movement. He strove to rally together and consolidate the forces of Russian revolutionary Social Democracy and launched a campaign for the convergence of the theory of scientific socialism with the mass workers' movement.

Lenin's first steps to establish a proletarian party of a new type were closely connected with the struggle against Russian and international opportunism. In the mid 1890s the Russian Social Democrats still comprised a single whole in ideological terms, for Economism, that "reverse" trend in Russian Social Democracy, was only just raising its head. Marxism in Russia

had first of all to fight the petty-bourgeois ideology of Narodism, which was, in Lenin's words, "a Russian variety of revisionism"¹ with respect to Marxism. Individual representatives of Narodism, like revisionists, professed Marxism in word and renounced it in deed; the same attitude was characteristic of all legal Marxists. On his arrival in St. Petersburg, Lenin launched ideological struggle against liberal Narodism and legal Marxism alike.

Since, by the end of the 19th century, Marxism had become virtually the dominant theory among advanced social doctrines current in Western Europe, "in Russia theories hostile to Marxism could not be openly expressed. Instead, they reduced Marxism to sophistry and falsified it (though sometimes unconsciously); they appeared to be Marxist and, 'by referring to Marx', tried to deny the application of Marx's theory in Russia".² As he exposed the falsification and vulgarisation of Marxism, Lenin elaborated its three component parts — dialectical and historical materialism, political economy and scientific socialism — and creatively applied it to the conditions existing in Russia.

LENIN'S CRITICISM OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LIBERAL NARODISM

The proletarian movement has never emerged "overnight", in pure form. In Russia, in particular, it could take form not only by renouncing "all petty-bourgeois admixtures, restrictions, narrowness and distortions",³ but at the time of Lenin's arrival in St. Petersburg, Narodnik theories of petty-bourgeois socialism were the main ideological obstacle in the way of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Karl Marx", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 85. — *Ed.*

² V. I. Lenin, "Apropos of an Anniversary", *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 111. — *Ed.*

³ V. I. Lenin, "From the History of the Workers' Press in Russia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 252. — *Ed.*

Marxism and the Social-Democratic movement in Russia. In spite of the blows it had suffered from Plekhanov, Narodism was still alive and continued to exert its influence on Russian revolutionaries. That this was so was largely due to the country's economic backwardness and its predominantly peasant population, still labouring under the survival of serfdom.

Lenin completed the ideological rout of Narodism. In his works the Russian Marxists' struggle against Narodnik ideology was raised to a new, higher level. As distinct from Plekhanov, who limited his criticism of Narodism to considering the blunders made by the *narodniks*, Lenin carried out an in-depth analysis of the historical roots of Narodnik ideas, their class essence and characteristic mixture of progressive and reactionary elements.

By the 1890s Narodism had lost its vigour. It had degenerated, renounced the idea of peasant revolution, and was gradually shifting to bourgeois liberalism. Once a more or less consistent doctrine, it had now become "nothing but tags and tatters".⁸ The actual development of capitalist relations had led Narodniks into an ideological impasse. Their utopian notion that the specific (communal) structure of the peasant economy could serve as the basis for socialism came into acute contradiction with reality. The old peasant socialism of the 1840s and 1850s was consonant with that stage of Russia's economic development at which capitalism was weak and the petty-bourgeois nature of peasant economy was not yet manifest. The development of capitalism brought about the stratification of the peasantry as a class: the village population split into the rural bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat, and "the old Russian peasant socialism split up with it, making way for workers' socialism on the one hand, and degeneration into vulgar petty-bourgeois radicalism, on the other".⁹

In a period when democratic and socialist forces still formed

⁸ V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", *Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 397. — *SL*.

⁹ V. I. Lenin, "What the Friends of the People! Are and Are Not They Fight the Social-Democrats?", *Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 204. — *SL*.

a single whole, Narodnik ideology was a vanguard trend in Russian social thought. The ideas of Narodnik socialism, such as the peasants' right to land, the abolition of large landed estates, etc. had then roots deep in the reality of Russian economic life and constituted a logical stage in the evolution of the revolutionary movement and democratic ideology. Narodnik orientation towards socialism as the solution to the controversial social issues of their day enabled that movement to make a positive contribution to the development of the liberation movement in Russia. However, the Narodniks failed to find a realistic path to socialism and based their view of capitalism "on backward theories, long ago discarded in Western Europe".*

The ideology of peasant utopian socialism, which had earlier played a positive role, now found itself in a deep crisis, out of tune with the actual processes taking place in the country's socio-economic life, and unable to cope with the new problems facing the social movement.

The formation in 1883 of Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group opened a new page in the history of Russian social thought and the liberation struggle. Its publications paved the way for the spread of Marxism in Russia. Russian translations of Marx's and Engels's works helped turn Russian revolutionary thought from utopian to scientific socialism; these translations included: the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, written jointly by Marx and Engels, *Wage Labour and Capital* and *The Poverty of Philosophy* by Marx, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* by Engels, etc. Plekhanov's *Socialism and the Political Struggle* and *Our Differences* helped to shape the world outlook of the first Russian Marxists and stimulated the setting up of the first Marxist study circles.

The process of overcoming the influence of Narodism among the revolutionary youth proved to be rather complicated and prolonged. As the proletarian stage of the liberation movement

* V. I. Lenin, "The Heritage We Renounce", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 516.— Ed.

set in, the struggle between the Marxists and the Narodniks became more acute. Disturbed by the success of Marxist thought, the ideologists of Narodism launched an offensive against the Social-Democrats and the teaching of Marx and Engels, which they tried to distort and falsify.

The famine of 1891-92 and the increasing ruin of the peasantry obliged the democratically-minded sections of the public to enquire into the causes of such widespread destitution, and to look more closely at Russia's capitalist development and its general prospects. Renouncing capitalism from the standpoint of petty-bourgeois utopian socialism, the Narodniks erroneously saw the way out of the peasants' critical situation in a reversal of social progress. They declared the Marxist conclusion that capitalist development was an objective law, to be immoral and accused the Marxists of striving to proletarianise the peasants and deprive them of land. They also argued that the Marxists were thoughtlessly applying to Russia a theory based on an examination of the situation in Western Europe. Defending the old programme of Narodism, N.K. Mikhailovsky wrote: "I consider the position of a Russian disciple of Marx as very difficult and controversial indeed. His ideal is a collective organisation, the worker's ownership of the land and the means of production; at the same time he must welcome the divorce between labour and property, the dispossession of the peasants and the coming into being of the proletariat."

Another prominent ideologist of Narodism, V. P. Vorontsov, categorically objected to the very idea that it was possible to be guided by Marxist theory in Russia, explaining that, first, "Russia is an agricultural country, and the Marxist theory is based on the data from factory industry; second, our industrial proletariat is too small as yet to claim a leading position in the country in the near future". That is why "the construction of theories with the proletariat in the foreground is contrary to the country's practical needs". The author declared that the Social-Democrats "prejudiced public opinion in favour of the approaching capitalist system", thus "preparing the ground for the expropriation of the peasantry to the benefit of the

bourgeoisie". There was no basis in Russia, he concluded, for the existence of a Social-Democratic party.

By the 1890s Narodism was no longer a homogeneous movement but had, as Lenin noted, its right and left wings. It also continued to have a revolutionary underground wing. Narodnik groups conducted propaganda in workers' study circles on a par with the Marxists but, taken as a whole, Narodnik ideology, denying as it did the great historical role of the working class and the need for a Social-Democratic party, interfered with the introduction of scientific socialism into the workers' movement and prevented the liberation struggle from passing to a higher, proletarian stage. To deal a final blow to Narodnik theory, it was necessary to conduct a thorough study of the Russia's economic system from a Marxist position.

This gigantic theoretical work was undertaken by Lenin after his arrival in St. Petersburg and finally led to the book entitled *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, which he completed while in exile in Siberia. In his other works of that period — *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", "The Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party", etc.— Lenin defended and developed Marxism and the theoretical and political foundations of the Russian Social-Democratic movement and its political programme.

The book *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, the most important among these works, was written in response to the slander campaign against Marxism launched by the *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (Russian Wealth) magazine; in the 1890s this magazine was taken over by Narodniks, and Mikhailovsky, the most influential representative of the old Narodnik socialism, was its editor-in-chief. His attacks on Marxism were particularly dangerous and called for a substantiated rebuff.

Mikhailovsky, who in the 1870s defended Marx from attacks by bourgeois apologists, had now moved to the right and

himself turned upon Marxism. The militant socialism of Herzen and Chernyshevsky and their demand for objective analysis were gradually being replaced in his thinking by an undisguised subjectivism. Mikhailovsky wrote that he did not see how the advance to socialism might be "guaranteed" by the natural course of events and insisted that socialism was nothing but a subjectivist socio-ethical ideal. A sociologist, he said, cannot accept an objective course of events, but must create an ideal in conformity with his moral principles, and try to translate it into life. Refusing to take into account the objective course of history, Mikhailovsky, in Lenin's words, replaced "critical, materialist inquiry by a utopia" *.

The subjective method in sociology, combining a utopian belief in Russia's special course of development and an idealistic approach to the role of the individual in history, was typical of socio-political thought at that time. It rejected bourgeois objectivism and considered it the moral duty of revolutionary intellectuals to enhance the civic self-awareness of the peasants, fight for the interests of the people and for the elimination of private landownership. This method served to confirm the programmatic demand of the revolutionary Narodniks to fight for a shortcut to socialism to be achieved through the peasant commune, bypassing the capitalist stage of development. Originally, this demand was formulated as an alternative to liberal bourgeois concept of progress in Russia, which justified passive acceptance of reality. As capitalism and the workers' movement developed, however, the inadequacy of the theory and programme of the old peasant socialism became evident and belief in the commune and a peasant revolution was shattered. The contradiction between the old ideology and the actual historical process came in bold relief. The Narodniks could not see this evolution as a natural historical process, the ideologists of peasant socialism could not analyse the historical process from a materialist standpoint, for such an approach would signify a complete break with their old view of the world and

* V I Lenin, *The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr Struve's Book*, *Collected Works* Vol I p 406 Ed

their traditional notion of Russia's road to socialism. Lenin said that dealing with Mikhailovsky's arguments he criticised the whole Russian peasant socialism, hostile to the dialectical method, which, in Marx's words, "requires us to regard society as a living organism in its functioning and development".*

The very question, "Must Russia pass through the capitalist stage of development?", which was posed in all Narodnik writings, revealed their subjective approach to the social process. "The question," Lenin wrote, "was not given a Marxist formulation at all, but was in conformity with the subjective methods of various native philosophers of ours."**

The fact that all aspects of the Narodniks' world outlook were consonant with the subjective method in sociology, which was its theoretical foundation, caused Lenin to criticise subjectivism in the very first issue of his work *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*. Revealing the inadequacy of the subjectivist method in sociology, Lenin showed that it led away from reality and proceeded not from that which objectively existed, but from that which was desired, thus giving birth to all sorts of utopian schemas that contradicted the actual course of social development.

Utopian socialism, Marx and Engels pointed out, "bears an inverse relation to historical development".*** At first it is progressive and even revolutionary in many respects, but as capitalism develops and class contradictions are exacerbated, it manifests reactionary features. This happened to Narodism in general, and to its philosophical content in particular.

Mikhailovsky attacked the theoretical foundations of Marxism from a subjectivist-idealistic position and called into question the revolution that Marx had caused in the social science by demonstrating the need to apply the dialectical-materialist

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 189.— Ed.

** Ibid., p. 194.— Ed.

*** Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party", in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 516.— Ed.

method in interpreting historical events. Mikhailovsky denied the scientific nature of Marxist sociology and rejected materialist dialectics. Responding to these attacks by the leading theoretician of the *Russkoye Bogatstvo*, Lenin convincingly showed that Marx was the first to put sociology on a scientific base.

Before Marx, sociologists considered society as a single whole and did not distinguish between the important and unimportant, the primary and secondary in the complicated tangle of social phenomena. Marx discovered an objective criterion for such differentiation, the guideline which helps find one's bearings in the motley pattern of social events. "He did so by singling out the economic sphere from the various spheres of social life, by singling out *production relations* from all social relations as being basic, primary, determining all other relations."^{*}

Sociology became a science thanks to Marx's formulation of the concept of the socio-economic formation as the sum total of the given production relations, and his proof that the development of such formations is a natural historical process.

Mikhailovsky attempted to reduce Marxism to primitive "economic materialism". Such a vulgar interpretation of Marxism was also characteristic of legal Marxists and opportunist leaders of the Second International, who thus tried to justify their own belief in the automatic and spontaneous nature of social processes and the evolution of capitalism into socialism.^{**} However, as Lenin pointed out, Marx and Engels had never called their teaching "economic materialism". It is not such in essence,

^{*} V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 138.— *Ed.*

^{**} When he still held Marxist views, Karl Kautsky wrote, speaking about Bernstein: "He conceives Marxist theory as a teaching, according to which economic development will in the final analysis bring about a situation when society will have no other alternative but to introduce socialism" (K. Kautsky, *To the Critique of the Theory and Practice of Marxism* ["Anti-Bernstein"], Moscow-Petrograd, 1923, p. 91). Today, too, bourgeois sociologists take a vulgar view of Marxism, saying it reduces everything to material factors, to "impersonal laws of historical development".— *Ed.*

for it embraces all social relations and establishes a definite connection and interaction between economic and ideological factors. The latter are only a superstructure over the former, which emerge independently of man's will and consciousness. The Marxists "were the first socialists to raise the issue of the need to analyse all aspects of social life, and not only the economic".*

The determining role of the economic basis does not in the least detract from the importance of superstructural phenomena. While elaborating on Marxist theory, Lenin revealed the enormous role played by the ideological factors of social development. He proved the inconsistency of Mikhailovsky's assertion that economic need (determinism) devalues the role of the individual, turning him into a puppet guided "from a mysterious underground by the immanent laws of historical necessity".

The concept of determinism does not lead to fatalism, and in no way diminishes the role of the individual in history, for history is created precisely by individuals' activity. Marxism proceeds from the fact that the objective laws that determine the direction of social development do not operate automatically, but through men's practical activity, through their struggle, which influences the rates and forms of social change. The acceleration or deceleration of the historically determined process largely depends upon the direction being pursued in the conflict of social forces. Marxism is permeated with a sense of the revolutionary activeness of the progressive class, "it combines the quality of being strictly and supremely scientific ... with that of being revolutionary; it does not combine them accidentally and not only because the founder of the doctrine combined in his own person the qualities of a scientist and a revolutionary, but does so intrinsically and inseparably".** The real question that arises in assessing an individual's social activity, Lenin notes, is: what are the conditions in which this activity will

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 161-62.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 327.— *Ed.*

be successful? If an individual does not take into account the real situation and does not try to rely on the struggle waged by the progressive class, he cannot count on success.

Lenin directly linked the general philosophical question of freedom and necessity with the theoretical and practical tasks facing the Russian Marxists, and called on them to carry out "the *Investigation* of Russian production relations and their evolution, employing the established practices of the *Materialist* method and *Theoretical* political economy"* and in this way to work out the concrete programme of the revolutionary struggle. Lenin's consistent analysis of Russia's economic evolution, conducted from a Marxist position, was the best refutation of the socio-economic doctrines of Narodism.

With the publication of Marx's *Capital*, the main theoretical problem for Russian socialists became the prospects for capitalist development in Russia. Lenin wrote that "in posing these problems the Narodniks performed a great *historical* service"*** to Russian social thought. However, the solution they proposed was fundamentally mistaken. The definitive expression of Narodnik ideology on the problem of capitalism in Russia was set forth in the theories put forward by N. F. Danielson and V. P. Vorontsov, who declared that Russian capitalism lacked any basis for development and was, therefore, futile. They argued that capitalist development impoverished the peasant and thus undermined the domestic market, and that Russia's belated capitalist development made it unable to compete with other countries on the world market. Capitalism, they concluded, had no real basis or chance of success in Russia.

The absence of a market for Russian capital was one of the principal arguments put forward by liberal Narodniks against the application of Marxism to Russia and in defence of their theory of non-capitalist development without political struggle against autocracy. Vorontsov's appeals "to the

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 266-67.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Heritage We Renounce", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 515— *Ed.*

government" and Danielson's calls "on society" to introduce socialist changes on the basis of the peasant commune showed that Narodnik ideology had arrived at an impasse, and this gave rise to all kind of liberal Narodnik "projects"

For this reason, the first paper Lenin read to the Petersburg Marxists dealt with the question of the market. In this paper Lenin emphasised the need to search for a new methodological approach to the development of capitalism in Russia, and one that differed in principle from that of the Narodniks. The problem of the market, he said, "must be removed from the sphere of fruitless speculation about 'possibility' and 'necessity' to the solid ground of reality, that of studying and *explaining* what shape the Russian economic order is taking, and why it is taking that shape and no other" *

Lenin showed that the impoverishment of the popular masses was an inevitable corollary of capitalism and the condition of its development, while the emergence of the domestic market was its logical result. The mass expropriation of the peasants on the one hand, and the concentration of capital on the other, led to the expansion of the market. Drawing on numerous statistical data, Lenin proved that capitalism already dominated Russian economic life.

The Narodnik Economists could no longer deny that capitalism was developing in Russia, however, they considered it a "hot house plant" that was artificially cultivated by the government on alien soil. Against capitalist factory production they set so called popular production (handicraft industry, artels, etc.), in which they saw elements of a collective, socialist economy. Pinning their hopes on communal principles and the handicraft industry as a counterweight to the spread of capitalism, the Narodniks would not see that all types of "popular production" were being steadily and inexorably drawn into the sphere of capitalist commodity relations. The "friends of the people" revealed the petty bourgeois nature of their ideology in their attempts to play down social antagonisms and class

* V I Lenin On the So-Called Market Question *Collected Works*
Vol 1 pp 110-11 Ed

contradictions both within the peasant commune and in so-called popular production, thus masking social reality with its growing exploitation of the working people by capital both in the town and in the countryside.

In fact, Russia's post-Reform history was the history of a massive expropriation of the peasants, unprecedented in its scale and intensity. Lenin's analysis carried out from a Marxist position, revealed that the system of commodity production had already become the basis of the agricultural economy and led to the division of the peasantry into the rich and the poor. "The break-up, the depeasantisation of our peasants and handicraftsmen", Lenin wrote, "furnishes *factual* proof of the correctness of precisely the Social-Democratic conception of Russian reality, the conception that the peasants and the handicraftsmen are *petty producers* in the 'categorical' meaning of the term, that is, are *petty-bourgeois*."^{*}

Lenin called the above thesis the central point of the theory of proletarian socialism as compared with the previous peasant socialism, which understood neither the essence of the commodity production under which petty producers existed, nor the inevitability of their capitalist stratification.

Thus the "popular production" idealised by liberal Narodniks was not an alternative to capitalism, but its undeveloped, embryonic form. Opposing capitalism in words, the Narodniks actually defended its lower, most primitive forms, which weighed down upon the rural working masses and checked social progress and the development of the class struggle. The Marxists, argued Lenin, were duty-bound to strip away from the Russian village the imaginary flowers with which it was embellished, and oppose the philistine idealisation of reality, so that "the proletariat may understand what sort of chains everywhere fetter the working people, that they may understand how these chains are forged, and be able to rise against them".^{**}

^{*} V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 233.— *Ed.*

^{**} V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 236.— *Ed.*

Lenin exposed the theoretical errors of Narodnik Economists, who did not understand the laws governing the development of a simple commodity into capitalist production. He traced the process of capitalist development in Russia through various stages, from simple cooperation to capitalist manufactory, and then to large-scale machine industry; the latter replaced not some mythical "popular industry", but the capitalist manufactory then dominant in handicraft production. The invasion of agriculture by capital was characteristic of the entire post-Reform period. Commercial and money-lending capital held sway over labour in every village. The old semi-feudal commune was disintegrating, unable to prevent the development of capitalism.

The fact that the revolutionary democrats Herzen and Chernyshevsky placed their hopes on the village commune as the basis for socialist transformation in Russia was explained by the weakness of capitalism in Russia at that time. Their ideas represented an attempt to find a material support for social revolution in such a situation. However, by the 1890's to believe that the commune could serve as the basis for eliminating exploitation was to indulge in illusions. Such attempts were evidence of the degeneration of peasant socialism into a "radical-democratic representation of the petty-bourgeois peasantry".*

The Narodnik programme of non-capitalist development, supplemented by utopian projects for developing "popular production", was not only illusory but also reformist and opportunist.

The magazine *Russkoye Bogatstvo* called on "cultured individuals" to set up large workshops and factories without capitalists, based on a self-governed village commune, and to organise handicraft artels.

Establishing communal, collective large-scale production was, however, not as simple as the Narodniks believed. Commenting on one such project, Lenin wrote: "You did not pay attention to one little circumstance, namely, the whole organisation

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 277.— Ed.

of our social economy. Since you did not understand that this is a capitalist economy, you did not notice that *on this basis* all possible artels are nothing but petty palliatives, which do not in the least remove either the concentration of the means of production, including money, in the hands of a minority (this concentration is an indisputable fact), or the complete impoverishment of the vast mass of the population — palliatives which at best will only elevate a handful of individual handicraftsmen to the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie. From an ideologist of the working people you turn into an ideologist of the petty bourgeoisie.”*

Lenin showed that the organisation of large-scale “production without entrepreneurs”, as proposed by Narodnik journalists, required a whole set of conditions, including, first of all, the socialisation of production brought about by capitalism, and then the replacement of the existing social system based on private property by a society different in principle, where the means of production would belong to the whole of society instead of to private individuals. However, to expropriate the bourgeoisie, “a popular revolutionary movement against the bourgeois regime is required, a movement of which only the working-class proletariat, which has no ties with this regime, is capable”,** whereas the Narodniks denied the historical role of the working class, as well as the role of capitalism in creating the material prerequisites of socialism.

The economic views of liberal Narodniks determined their political programme — a typical programme of petty-bourgeois reformism which did not go beyond the framework of bourgeois relations.

The fact that the Narodnik ideologists turned for help to the state and to bourgeois society testified to the profound crisis within that ideology. Having put away the banner of peasant revolution, the Narodniks began to draw on those forces

* V. I. Lenin, “The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve’s Book”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 409.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, “What the ‘Friends of the People’ Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 247.— *Ed.*

which actually stood guard over the interests of the bourgeoisie. The reason was to be found not only in the internal contradictions of Narodnik ideology, but also in the class shifts occurring in Russia and transforming the communal peasantry into the petty bourgeoisie. "Being hostile to capitalism," Lenin noted, "the small producers constitute a transitory class that is closely connected with the bourgeoisie and for that reason is incapable of understanding that the large-scale capitalism it dislikes is not fortuitous, but is a direct product of the entire contemporary economic (and social, and political, and juridical) system arising out of the struggle of mutually opposite social forces. Only inability to understand this can lead to such absolute stupidity as that of appealing to the 'state'."* In the final analysis, it was precisely this ignorance of the bourgeois nature of the state and society, this inability to see the connection between state policy and the capitalist nature of the Russian economy that predetermined the emergence of liberal tendencies in the Narodnik practical programme. While the revolutionary Narodniks of the 1870s were in their majority hostile to liberalism, in the 1890s there set in "a touching intimacy with it".**

In his offensive against liberal Narodism, Lenin examined its ideology as a whole, revealing its class roots and the place it occupied in the evolution of social thought in Russia.

Narodism, he concluded, was a whole world outlook, a sum total of various elements. According to Lenin, it contained some "elements of democracy

" + utopian socialism

" + petty-bourgeois reforms

" + the reactionary nature of the petty-bourgeois".***

The ratio of these elements differed in various historical conditions, and they played different roles. The early Narod-

* V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 354-55.— Ed.

** Ibid., p. 397.— Ed.

*** V. I. Lenin, *Copybooks on the Agrarian Question. 1900-1916*, Moscow, 1969, pp. 21-22 (in Russian).— Ed.

niks were mostly characterised by the first two elements, while in the later period the last two became prominent. Lenin revealed the class roots of Narodism and proved that its ideology had been born of the predominance of small producers in the social structure of post-Reform Russia. He saw the class essence of Narodism in the protest against the survivals of feudalism and the onslaught of big capital *from the viewpoint of the peasant, a small producer*. Narodism differed from Marxism in its criticism of capitalism: the Marxists criticised it from the positions of the proletariat, proceeding from the fact that capitalism, by socialising production, created the material base for the future society and also for the builder of that society; the Narodniks denounced capitalism from the standpoint of a small producer, idealising him and mourning over the collapse of the old, feudal structure.

Their petty-bourgeois criticism of capitalism brought the Russian Narodniks, despite certain specific characteristics, close to related trends in the West. In his article "On the Characteristics of Economic Romanticism" Lenin showed that the Narodniks' economic doctrine was in fact a Russian variety of European romanticism, clearly expressed in the theories of Sismondi, a Swiss economist who likewise did not see the indissoluble link existing between small-scale production and big capital as the two forms of commodity production, and who idealised the small producer, criticising capitalism only from a sentimental point of view.

Russian Narodism was not a unique phenomenon. The question of the correlation between democratism and Narodism, which Lenin raised in the 1890s, became "one of the most serious questions"* of bourgeois revolution in Asian countries as well. In his article "Democracy and Narodism in China" Lenin showed that Narodism as a type of ideology was characteristic not only of Russia. It combined militant democratism with socialist dreams, the desire to avoid the capitalist phase of development and the call for radical agra-

* V. I. Lenin, "Democracy and Narodism in China", *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, p. 163.— *Ed.*

rian reform. "It is these two last ideological and political trends that constitute the element which forms *Narodism* — Narodism in the specific sense of that term, i.e., as distinct from democracy, as a supplement to democracy."* Therefore, democratic movements, particularly in countries with a numerous petty bourgeoisie, may assume forms similar to Russian Narodism.

Lenin explained the controversial nature of Narodnik ideology by the dual nature of the peasantry as an intermediate class: "The Narodnik, in matters of theory, is just as much a Janus, looking with one face to the past and the other to the future, as in real life the small producer is, who looks with one face to the past, wishing to strengthen his small farm ... and with the other face to the future, adopting a hostile attitude to the capitalism that is ruining him."** In his book *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, and in several other works, Lenin raised a question of immense historical importance: What must be the attitude of the working class towards the petty bourgeoisie and its programmes?

As Lenin pointed out, it was impossible to answer this question without taking into account the dual nature of the petty bourgeoisie, which was especially pronounced in Russia where there was less antagonism between the petty and the big bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie as a class occupies an intermediary position between labour and capital; hence its vacillations between the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie, and its combination of reactionary and progressive features. The petty bourgeoisie is progressive inasmuch as it puts forward general democratic demands and is fighting against the remnants of serfdom; but it is also reactionary because it tries to preserve its status as a class of small proprietors, to check and reverse social development. The Narodnik petty-bourgeois doctrine was likewise reactionary because it rested on moribund

* Ibid., p. 166.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 503.— *Ed.*

social forms and tried to preserve them artificially. Yet it contained some revolutionary-democratic ideas, objectively directed at freeing the country's social and economic life from the remnants of serfdom.

Lenin opposed attempts to renounce the whole of the Narodnik programme as completely reactionary. He repeatedly criticised the vulgar Marxists for not seeing "the vital life of the peasant revolution beneath the lifeless doctrine of Narodnik theory".* He demanded that a concrete historical approach be taken towards the programmes of petty-bourgeois ideologists, the Narodniks among them. While rejecting all the reactionary elements in these programmes, Marxists "must not only accept the general democratic points, but carry them through more exactly, deeply and further".**

It is worth noting that modern bourgeois historiography crudely distorts Lenin's dialectical approach to Narodism. American historian R. Pipes wrote in his book on Struve: "Having concluded some time earlier that Mikhailovsky, Vorontsov ... and other publicists of the 'Populist' camp ... represented the interests of the small agrarian and industrial producer (the 'petty bourgeoisie'), he [Lenin] decided they were class enemies, who had to be mercilessly fought."*** In actual fact, however, Lenin's criticism of Narodism was of a constructive nature: while rejecting its reactionary and utopian features, he carefully picked out and recognised its revolutionary and general democratic elements.

The struggle Lenin waged against Mikhailovsky, Krivenko, Yuzhakov and other false "friends of the people" was in fact the struggle against the reactionary aspects of liberal Narodism, against its attempts to substitute petty-bourgeois for proletarian socialism, against its slide into opportunism

* V. I. Lenin, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution", *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 282.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 504.— *Ed.*

*** R. Pipes, *Struve. Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905*, Cambr. (Mass.), 1970, p. 136.— *Ed.*

and rapprochement with liberalism, against its attacks on the Social-Democrats.

The campaign launched by *Russkoye Bogatstvo* against the Russian Marxists, Lenin noted, proved convincingly that the period in Russia's social history when "democracy and socialism were merged in one inseparable and indissoluble whole (as was the case, for example, in Chernyshevsky's day), had gone never to return".* Lenin substantiated the policy aimed at the complete and final divorce of the Russian working-class movement from all varieties of peasant socialism, at the separation of the proletariat from the general democratic stream and its consolidation on a strictly class, Marxist basis.

Lenin provided a comprehensive and profound criticism of Narodism in his works: he demonstrated the insolvency of its philosophical, economic and political premises, and revealed the great attraction of Marxism as the proletariat's scientific ideology. Russian Marxists scored a convincing victory over liberal Narodniks on the ideological plane, as a result of which the influence of Narodnik ideas on the Russian revolutionary elements quickly diminished and the Russian working-class movement acquired a solid, scientific, Marxist foundation.

THE REFUTATION OF LEGAL MARXISM

The spread of Marxism in Russia produced a reaction among radical bourgeois intellectuals, which found its expression in the emergence of legal Marxism — an ideological and political trend among the Russian progressively-minded bourgeoisie that did not yet form an independent political party. Its emergence was due to the increased opposition of radical bourgeois intellectuals, who stepped onto the political scene at a time when the workers' movement was growing, and with it the influence of Marxism.

At first the legal Marxists (P. B. Struve, M. I. Tugan-Ba-

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 271.— Ed.

ranovsky, N. A. Berdayev, et al.) joined the Social-Democratic movement, hoping to turn it into bourgeois reformism. They were prepared to act jointly with the Social-Democrats, but only up to the moment when the Russian working class claimed the role of the leading force in the liberation movement and in the revolutionary struggle against autocracy and capital. This constituted the beginning of a process which isolated the liberal-bourgeois current within the liberation movement, and which compelled its representatives to flirt with Marxism at the initial stage.

Struve and his followers came out in legal periodicals against Narodism jointly with the revolutionary Marxists. That was, in Lenin's words, an alliance of "the heterogeneous elements of the Marxist movement in the fight against the Narodniks".* While formally recognising Marxism, they in fact distorted it, trying, as became clear from subsequent developments, to adapt an abbreviated, falsified version of Marxism to serve the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The legal Marxists were essentially bourgeois democrats who borrowed from Marxism only its thesis on the progressive nature of capitalism as compared with serfdom. For them, divorce from Narodism was not a transition to proletarian socialism, but to bourgeois liberalism.

P. B. Struve's book, *Critical Remarks on the Subject of Russia's Economic Development* containing a criticism of Narodnik ideology was published in October 1894. It was the first legally printed publication in Russia claiming to represent a Marxist view of the problem and it could not but produce a dual reaction: the Social-Democrats welcomed the criticism of the Narodnik theoretical doctrine and its economic policy; but, at the same time, they were worried by Struve's declaration that, while agreeing with Marxism "on certain major points", he was not "given to orthodoxy"; he did not point out exactly, however, which of the Marxist propositions he accepted, and which he did not.

* V. I. Lenin, "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 97.—Ed.

Lenin read a paper on Struve's book in a Marxist study circle in St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1894. It was entitled "The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature". The legal Marxists were represented by Struve, Potresov and Klasson. According to V. V. Starkov, a sharp divergence of views was revealed during the debates over the paper, which touched upon the "heart of historical and economic problems".

Despite these controversies, however, a temporary rapprochement took place between the Struvists and the St. Petersburg group of Social-Democrats, which was operating illegally and which shortly thereafter established The League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. "After several preliminary meetings," N. K. Krupskaya recalled, "the basis for joint work began to appear."* That basis consisted in the community of certain notions on the prospects of capitalism in Russia and the need to overcome Narodnik ideology. Struve and his adherents also spoke out, though rather inconsistently, against autocracy and in support of bourgeois-democratic freedoms. This made it realistically possible to enter into a temporary alliance with representatives of legal Marxism, enabling the revolutionary Social-Democrats to print their works in legal Struvist-orientated journals, and this was how the works by Lenin and Plekhanov first came to be published. "It is no secret," Lenin wrote about that time, "that the brief period in which Marxism blossomed on the surface of our literature was called forth by an alliance between people of extreme and of very moderate views."** It was in connection with that alliance that Lenin argued the acceptability and even necessity of temporary agreements, concluded between political parties in the face of a common enemy.

"Only those who are not sure of themselves can fear to enter into temporary alliances even with unreliable people; not a single political party could exist without such alliances.

* *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, in 5 volumes, Vol. 1, p. 230 (in Russian).—Ed.

** V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 361.—Ed.

The combination with the legal Marxists was in its way the first really political alliance entered into by Russian Social-Democrats. Thanks to this alliance, an astonishingly rapid victory was obtained over Narodism, and Marxist ideas (even though in vulgarised form) became very widespread.”*

This alliance, however, was entered into with certain reservations: it presupposed not only support for one's temporary ‘allies’ but also criticism of their errors, and it provided the revolutionary Marxists with the opportunity to reveal to the proletariat the class antagonisms inherent in the bourgeois society and the irreconcilability of the interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The practical result of the alliance with legal Marxists was the joint publication in 1895 of the collection *Materials for a Characterisation of Our Economic Development*, which included, among others, Lenin's article “The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book”, signed “K. Tulin”; it criticised not only Narodniks, but also representatives of legal Marxism.

This article was based on the paper Lenin had read in 1894. He himself noted that the polemic with Struve “was incomparably sharper and more definite (in its Social-Democratic conclusions) than in the article published in the spring of 1895. The latter was toned down partly for censorship reasons and partly for the sake of an ‘alliance’ with the legal Marxists for joint struggle against Narodism”.** However, the tsarist censors were alerted precisely by the Social-Democratic conclusions contained in Lenin's article. Marxism, it was reported by the Censorship Committee, “particularly in the article by K. Tulin, assumes the character of a harmful doctrine, upheld by the so-called Russian Marxists; it consists in a teaching based on the struggle of the classes ... which requires a militant organisation of the workers”.

Lenin was the first among the Russian Social-Democrats

* Ibid., p. 362.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, “Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 98.— *Ed.*

to reveal the class nature of legal Marxism and its revisionist tendency. As early as 1895, i. e., several years before the "Bernsteiniade", as he recalled later, Lenin "pointed out that Mr. Struve was an unreliable Marxist with whom Social-Democrats should have no truck".* In his article criticising Struve's book, Lenin examined all the political, economic and philosophical views of the leader of the legal Marxists. While not denying that Struve's criticism of Narodism had some positive aspects, though here too there were blunders, Lenin concentrated on Struve's deviations from Marxism, on his attempts to strip Marxism of its revolutionary essence.

Struve used his criticism of Narodism to minimise the antagonistic contradictions within capitalism and to write an apologetics of capitalist progress. The basic ideological postulate of legal Marxists was epitomised in Struve's formula: we must recognise "our lack of culture" and go and "learn from capitalism". Contrary to the Narodniks, who regarded capitalism, which destroyed the foundations of the communal economy, as a regression, legal Marxists declared that it was an absolute benefit and eulogised its progress. Struve labelled the Narodnik thesis that capitalism ruined the peasant "the cornerstone of Narodnik theory", against which he set his own theory that the blame for the ruin of the peasantry lay with the "technical irrationality" of the small peasant economy.

Struve resorted to the "technical irrationality" thesis to avoid a class analysis of the results of capitalist progress and thus bypass the issue of the class struggle between labour and capital which was its consequence. Revealing the apologetic nature of Struve's deliberations, Lenin stressed that "every capitalist nation is a vehicle of technical progress and of the socialisation of labour, but at the cost of crippling and mutilating the producer".** However, through the socialisation of

* V. I. Lenin, "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 100. Unlike Lenin, Plekhanov did not openly oppose legal Marxists in the 1890s; in 1895, for example, he saw in Struve's bourgeois objectivism only "the noble enthusiasm of a Westerner".— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 393.— *Ed.*

labour capitalism creates the material base of socialism, and through the mechanism of capitalist production it unites and organises the working class, teaching it to fight for political power and placing the means of production into the hands of the whole society.

As regards Struve's argument that capitalist development constitutes an irresistible historical tendency, and his thesis on the "cultural-historical might of triumphant commodity production", Lenin noted that such an attitude can lead to justification of these phenomena and neglect of the class struggle, which is "the pivot" of Marx's "whole system of views".*

The principal error in Struve's book, and one characteristic of legal Marxism as a whole, was its bourgeois objectivism, its attempt to assume a supra-class position. As a result, antagonistic contradictions were played down and bourgeois ideas were brought in through the back door.

Criticising Struve's bourgeois objectivism, Lenin formulated the class principle to be applied in any analysis of social phenomena, a principle which organically combined the Party spirit and scientific objectivity. The Marxists, as distinct from the bourgeois objectivists, should not only point to the historical necessity of a given process, but should also discover which socio-economic formation determined the content of this process, and which class determined this necessity. While providing a comprehensive and objective analysis of social phenomena, the Marxists should also expose class contradictions and clearly define their viewpoint, which should be consonant with the interests of the advanced, revolutionary class. Marxism is characterised by partisanship, that is, while assessing any event or phenomenon, it openly and unequivocally shares the viewpoint of a definite social group, namely the proletariat.

Lenin showed that Struve was attempting to substitute sheer evolutionism and bourgeois reformism for revolutionary Marxism. He reduced the class struggle to social reforms,

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 308.— Ed.

considering them "both justified and economical" Analysing Marxism from this point of view, he argued that, according to Marx, "social reforms are links connecting capitalism with the system that will replace it"

Lenin criticised Struve's entire system of revisionist "amendments" to Marxism and countered Struve's attempts to distort Marx's teaching on the state by representing the state as a supra class category In his assertion that the state was principally the "organisation of order", Struve departed from "one of the most important points in Marx's theory" and passed over the close connection that existed "between this organ and the bourgeois class, which dominates in modern society" *

Struve's attempts to substitute the theory of the gradual modification of bourgeois society by way of reforms for the Marxist theory of a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism led directly to a liberal view of the bourgeois state Struve declared that only "a few places" in Marx's works of the 1840s gave any grounds for believing that he "imagined the transition from capitalism to a new society in the form of a sharp decline the collapse of capitalism" Since Marx's followers "are fighting for reforms", Struve went on, Marx's point of view as expressed in the 1840s "has been essentially modified" "a whole range of transitional stages" was introduced in place of the "chasm" that divided capitalism from the new system Lenin exposed the sophistry and inconsistency of such an interpretation of Marx's views First, the thesis on the transition to a new social system through the collapse of capitalism was contained not in "a few places" but "runs through all the works of Marx" Second, "no 'correction' whatever, either major or minor, has been made to Marx's viewpoint by the 'followers of Marx' " ** The struggle for reforms, Lenin explained, does not contradict Marx's teaching on the revolutionary destruction of capitalism, it is subordinate to that su

* V I Lenin The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr Struve's Book , *Collected Works* Vol 1 p 419 Ed

** V I Lenin The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr Struve's Book *Collected Works*, Vol 1 p 439 Ed

preme goal, and to achieve it, certain transitional stages are inevitable

Lenin's criticism of the philosophical views of the legal Marxists was an essential part of his polemics with them. Though extremely eclectic, these ideas were largely formed under the influence of neo-Kantianism. Struve and other legal Marxists maintained that Marxism was poorly substantiated in philosophical terms, and so they tried to combine certain Marxist propositions with the idealist views of Kant and his followers, for example, Cohen, Riehl, Simmel et al. Having shown that the Struvists were slipping into Kantian idealism, Lenin condemned those Marxists who espoused neo-Kantianism as a form of bourgeois influence upon the working class rather than dialectical materialism. Lenin's defence of Marxist philosophy was of particular importance, since, after the death of Engels, the various parties of the Second International had come to view philosophical outlook as the private affair of each individual socialist. Lenin denounced Struve's standpoint favouring the "equality" of all world views and showed that Marxist philosophy—dialectical and historical materialism—was indissolubly connected with the policies of the proletariat and its party.

Lenin's rejection of the very first attempts by Struve to revise Marxism was a model example of irreconcilability towards opportunism and was very important for the emerging Social Democratic party, for shaping the Marxist world outlook in its members.

Struve's revisionist attacks on Marxism preceded those of Bernstein, but it was the "Bernsteiniade" that became a turning point in the subsequent evolution of legal Marxism. In February 1899, in a letter to Potresov, Struve denounced Plekhanov's polemic with Bernstein and Conrad Schmidt, declaring that Bernstein's "denouncing an orthodox ideology which has lost all meaning", was of great merit. In this way Russian revisionism began to close ranks with international revisionism. Though he lived in exile at that time, Lenin immediately detected Struve's rapprochement with Bernstein and sounded the alarm.

After reading Bernstein's book, Lenin wrote in a letter to

his mother: "It is unbelievably weak theoretically — mere repetition of someone else's ideas.... In effect it is opportunism (or rather, Fabianism — the original of many of Bernstein's assertions and ideas is to be found in the Webbs' recent books), unbounded opportunism and possibilism...."* Lenin immediately saw the international nature of Bernsteinism. His article "Our Programme" written for the *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers' Gazette) when attempts were being made to revive its publication, Lenin began by pointing to this circumstance. "International Social-Democracy," he wrote, "is at present in a state of ideological wavering."**

Some time later Lenin noted a "general" turn to Bernsteinism among the majority of legal Marxists, who readily seconded their leader in renouncing the idea of social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was due to Bernsteinian opportunism that Struvism "ended up in liberalism". Lenin noted that one specific feature of legal Marxists which set them apart from their spiritual brothers in the West, was that they reached their logical conclusion — the formation of a liberal faction — much sooner. The exacerbation of class contradictions and the growing revolutionary crisis in Russia accelerated the degeneration of the legal Marxists into bourgeois liberals.

Lenin's refutation of legal Marxism went far beyond the boundaries of Russia in its historical significance. He himself wrote later that Struvism was not only a Russian but "an international striving on the part of the bourgeois theoreticians to kill Marxism with 'kindness', to crush it in their embraces.... In other words, they take from Marxism all that is acceptable to the liberal bourgeoisie..., they cast aside 'only' the living soul of Marxism, 'only' its revolutionary content."***

*V. I. Lenin, "To His Mother. September 1, 1899", *Collected Works*, Vol. 37, p. 281.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "Our Programme", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 210.— *Ed.*

*** V. I. Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 222.— *Ed.*

Lenin's criticism of Struvism was the start of a whole series of ideological battles between revolutionary Marxists led by Lenin and Russian and international opportunism. Legal Marxism was only the first of a number of other varieties of right opportunism within the Russian working-class movement, whose succession was determined by the inner logic of the struggle between proletarian and bourgeois ideology.

Lenin's struggle against liberal Narodism, legal Marxism and the Economism it gave rise to played a major role in the ideological shaping of young Social-Democracy and in the merger of scientific socialism with the workers' movement. Discarding all alien views, the Russian working-class movement firmly assumed a revolutionary Marxist position. As he worked to promote this process, Lenin formulated the ideas which subsequently gave birth to Bolshevism.

LENIN'S CONCEPT OF THE HEGEMONY OF THE PROLETARIAT AND THE TASKS OF RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

Lenin's work during the 1890s was exceptionally important for the nascent Marxist Party, for the elaboration of its strategy and tactics. *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book" and other works by Lenin on similar issues became, in effect, a wide-ranging programme of revolutionary struggle for the Russian Marxists.

Lenin made an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic situation in Russia and defined the tasks of the Social-Democrats accordingly. After closely examining the philosophic and economic views of Narodnik theoreticians, he showed the inadequacy of the subjectivist method in sociology and in any concrete analysis of the country's economic life. Lenin's main conclusions were subsequently corroborated by Russia's socio-economic development. He himself said that his work "The

Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book" "in many respects ... is a synopsis of subsequent economic studies (notably *The Development of Capitalism*)".*

Lenin's theoretical activities were largely determined by the practical needs of the Russian Social-Democrats and were aimed at elaborating the strategy and tactics of the Russian working-class movement in the struggle against autocracy and capitalism. Theory, Lenin emphasised, was called upon to help the proletariat in putting an end to all kinds of exploitation as soon as possible and to formulate slogans for the struggle to achieve this goal.

Lenin substantiated these slogans scientifically. In his works he produced convincing evidence that "capitalism has already taken firm root, taken definite shape not only in factory industry but also in the countryside and all over Russia in general".** As capitalism developed, the most revolutionary class, the proletariat, grew and came onto the social scene. Hence the conclusion that "there could be no road to socialism except through the working-class movement."*** "The political activity of the Social-Democrats lies in promoting the development and organisation of the working-class movement in Russia, in transforming this movement from its present state of sporadic attempts at protest, 'riots' and strikes devoid of a guiding idea, into an organised struggle of the whole Russian working class directed against the bourgeois regime and working for the expropriation of the expropriators and the abolition of the social system based on the oppression of the working people."****

The Russia's working class, Lenin showed, was the only and natural representative of its entire working and exploited

* V. I. Lenin, "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 98-99.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 378.— *Ed.*

*** V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 287.— *Ed.*

**** *Ibid.*, pp. 298-99.— *Ed.*

population: It was the natural representative in that the exploitation of the working people in the country had already become essentially capitalist, except for some survivals of serfdom. It was the "only" representative because only the higher stage of capitalist development, large-scale industry, created the material conditions and social forces necessary for the struggle against exploitation and for socialism.

Lenin also substantiated the close connection between the proletariat's socialist and democratic tasks, which fuse together in its class struggle against autocracy and capital. The Russian Marxists, he emphasised, should never forget the great importance of democratic issues.

Lenin's programme of action for the Russian Marxists was aimed at combining the struggle for democracy with the struggle for socialism. Such a combination was determined both by economic and political factors, as well as by the existence of two sets of socio-economic contradictions in the country. One of these called for the liquidation of the vestiges of feudalism and the establishment of a democratic republic, and the other — for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and winning of political power by the proletariat.

Thus proletariat was faced with the task of waging two social wars which differed in the composition of the class forces involved and the ultimate goals being pursued, but were nevertheless indissolubly linked together. The Russian Social-Democrats, Lenin pointed out, must teach the proletariat to lead the working people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie and guide the general democratic movement, so that it would be "capable of leading Russian democracy in a decisive struggle against the police autocracy".*

The overthrow of autocracy and the achievement of political freedom were only the necessary prerequisites for the transition to a socialist revolution, for the victory over the principal enemy — capitalism. When the best representatives of the Russian proletariat, wrote Lenin, assimilate the ideas

* V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 346.— *Ed.*

of scientific socialism, when these ideas become widespread and the workers establish stable organisations, "then the Russian Worker, rising at the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat (side by side with the proletariat of All countries) *along the straight road of open political struggle to the Victorious Communist Revolution*"* These concluding words of *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats* express the quintessence of Lenin's programme of action for the Russian Social Democrats, a programme which determined the main direction of their revolutionary struggle for many years ahead

The Social Democrats saw their task in the dissemination not only of scientific socialism, but also of democracy, for they had to prepare the proletariat for the role of leader of the democratic movement. Leadership by the proletariat is a decisive condition of the success of the democratic movement. Therefore, the proletarian party must lead the proletariat's class struggle, organising it in its two forms — the socialist, directed against the capitalist class and in support of socialism, and the democratic, directed against absolutism and in support of the democratisation of political and social life.

Although these two forms of struggle are closely connected, there is an essential difference between them. The first is the principal and determining form in which the proletariat can count only on the semi-proletarian elements and the poor peasants. In the democratic struggle the proletariat is supported by all the sections of the population opposed to autocracy, thus creating a broad social base for political alliances to be formed by the working class.

The Social Democrats, Lenin pointed out, should support all democratic movements directed against reactionary regimes, and all progressively minded social classes in their struggle against reactionary classes. But these are only alliances against a common enemy, and "no practical alliances can, or should,

* V I Lenin, "What the Friends of the People Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats", *Collected Works* Vol 1 p 300 Ed

lead to compromises or concessions on matters of theory, programme or banner".* Tactical flexibility, argued Lenin, must not involve compromise on matters of theory, ideology, but must be combined with total commitment to proletarian socialist ideals.

Russia was moving towards a bourgeois-democratic revolution of a new type, which was maturing in a situation in which the balance of class forces differed from that which had obtained in previous revolutions in the West, for now the proletariat was turning into an independent political force. Meanwhile, many Social-Democrats, Plekhanov amongst them, still believed in the old, traditional pattern of bourgeois revolution; they continued to ascribe the principal role to the liberal bourgeoisie which, in their opinion, was capable of conducting a revolutionary struggle against autocracy, and thus underestimated the revolutionary potential of the Russian peasantry.

In developing Marxism in accord with this change in the historical situation, Lenin revealed new perspectives in the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. As early as the 1890's he put forward the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in the democratic revolution, and then elaborated this idea in all its aspects. For this revolution to win complete victory it should, he maintained, be led not by the bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat. Only the proletariat, Lenin emphasised, can be a vanguard fighter for democracy. First, it is subjected to the most cruel oppression; second, it is the only consistent and absolute enemy of autocracy capable of fully democratising the political and social system so that it can go further towards achieving its ultimate goal.

As for the bourgeoisie, Lenin noted that capital in Russia "is particularly inclined to sacrifice its democracy and to enter into alliance with the reactionaries".** Its fear of the revolutionary working class makes it fear the complete democratisation

* V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 331.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 291-92.— *Ed.*

of the social and political order in the country and forces it into a deal with the old system at the expense of the people. Lenin showed that the reactionary nature of the Russian bourgeoisie and its readiness to compromise with tsarism causes an increasing divergence between its interests and those of the bulk of the peasantry.

The peasantry can put an end to the remnants of serfdom, acquire land and win freedom only by siding with the proletariat. On the other hand, only the peasantry, which is vitally interested in the abolition of landowner property and other survivals of serfdom, can be a dependable ally of the proletariat in the democratic revolution. Lenin put forward the idea of an alliance between the working class and the peasantry as the decisive force in the revolutionary transformation of society, thus taking a great step forward in the elaboration of the strategical and tactical foundations of the liberation movement in Russia.

But the proletariat must not, while trying to become leader of the general democratic movement, dissolve in that movement or merge with it. On the contrary, "if the working class *stands out* as the vanguard fighter for democratic institutions, this will *strengthen* the democratic movement, will *strengthen* the struggle for political liberty, because the working class will *spur on* all the other democratic and political opposition elements".*

Such "standing out" is necessary also on account of the tasks the proletariat is faced with as a class, and because "*only* in the working class can democracy find a champion who makes no reservations, is not irresolute and does not look back".**

While paying due tribute to the Narodniks' efforts to enlighten the peasant masses and awaken them from their slumbers, Lenin showed the way out of the impasse in which the old peasant socialism found itself. The radical intelligentsia was

* V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 336.— *Ed.*

** *Ibid.*, p. 335.— *Ed.*

not destined to arouse the peasants to a revolution, but under the new historical conditions a new force had emerged on the scene, capable of carrying out this task and that force was the workers' movement, the hegemony of the proletariat in the liberation struggle. Lenin's viewpoint on this issue coincided with the ideas of Marx and Engels on the prospects of the peasant movement. In peasantry, Marx pointed out, "*the proletarian revolution will obtain that chorus without which its solo becomes a swan song in all peasant countries*" * Engels also touched upon that problem in 1891 when speaking about the situation in Russia the movement of "the peasants will lead only to fruitless local uprisings, until the victorious uprising in the urban centres provides them with the cohesion and support they lack" **

The ideas expressed by Marx and Engels on the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry were buried in oblivion by the leaders of the Second International. Moreover, in the works of Bernstein, David and Hertz, which appeared in the 1890s, the Marxist view of the peasant question was radically revised. As Karl Kautsky recounted in his reminiscences, "the revisionist movement started with debates on the agrarian question" ***

The revisionists did not meet with a determined rebuff in the course of these debates. The position of Kautsky himself was highly typical. While in the main assuming a correct position on the theory of the agrarian question, he made serious errors in matters of tactics, leaving out of account the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. In 1899 he announced that the alliance between the working class and the peasantry had lost its former significance, and that therefore it was sufficient for the workers' party to neutralise the peasantry

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Collected Works Vol 11 Progress Publishers, Moscow 1979, p 193 Ed

** Karl Marx Frederick Engels *Werke* Band 38 Dietz Verlag, Berlin p 160 Ed

*** K Kautsky *Mein Lebenswerk* Hannover 1954 S 21 Ed

It was no accident that the German Social-Democrats failed to work out an agrarian programme. In August 1895, while in Berlin, Lenin attended a workers' meeting. A. Stadhagen, one of the leaders of the German Social-Democrats, made a report on the draft agrarian programme; he maintained that the workers' party could dispense with a special programme on the agrarian question. Lenin did not agree with this point of view.*

Already in the first draft programme of the Social-Democratic Party, Lenin put forward a whole series of demands on the peasant question, among them the demand that the *ot-rezki*** be returned to the peasants. In his works written in the 1890s he devoted considerable space to the question of the peasantry as the ally of the proletariat and to the agrarian question as a whole.

While fighting to establish an alliance between the working class and the peasantry, Lenin simultaneously called for a consistent, radical solution of the agrarian question, and this required a sober, scientific analysis of capitalist development in the countryside. He arrived at the conclusion that, despite the domination of capitalism in Russia as a whole, there were still many remnants of serfdom which were retarding the development of the productive forces and creating asiatic-type, barbarian conditions, which threatened the multimillion peasant mass with extinction. These remnants were a heavy burden on the shoulders of the peasantry, turning it into a natural ally of the proletariat.

Basing himself on a profound scientific analysis of the socioeconomic relations existing in Russian agriculture and taking account of the experience of the revolutionary struggle, Lenin worked persistently on the elaboration of a Bolshevik agrarian programme. The Social-Democrats, he wrote, would insist "on the complete abolition of landed proprietorship — that bulwark

* See X. Streb, *Lenin in Germany*, Moscow, 1959, p. 12 (in Russian).— Ed.

** The plots of land which had been in the peasants' use prior to the 1861 Reform, and which they then had to return to the landlords.— Ed.

of feudal institutions and traditions", and emphasised that this coincided "with the nationalisation of land".* This programme as was evidenced by the 1905-07 Revolution, was the fullest expression of the interests of the peasant masses and the needs of Russia's economic development. The demand that estates be confiscated and all land be nationalised subsequently formed the groundwork of the Leninist programme of the Bolshevik Party on the agrarian question.

Lenin took into account both the strong and weak points of the Narodnik agrarian programme, which embodied the peasants' desire to see landlord ownership of land abolished and constituted in effect the most radical solution of the agrarian question at the stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Yet the programme was not devoid of reformist illusions and liberal tendencies, and divorced economic from political transformation. Noting these shortcomings in the "agrarian democracy" of the Narodniks, Lenin pointed out that the Narodnik programme, if not combined with the political struggle to overthrow autocracy, without taking into account the revolutionary role of the proletariat, would remain a sentimental and benevolent project devoid of any practical value. Working on the agrarian programme of the Social-Democrats, Lenin stressed that the solution of the agrarian question in Russia required a militant alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, aimed at the overthrow of autocracy. Without this the abolition of the landlord ownership of land would be impossible. He substantiated most convincingly the close connection and interdependence existing between agrarian and political changes.

In the mid-1890s, Lenin began to elaborate the fundamental principles of proletarian policy with respect to the petty-bourgeois democrats. Later, these principles were embodied in the Leninist tactics of the "bloc of the left forces", directed at establishing a single front uniting all revolutionary democratic forces in a general offensive against the mainstays of tsarism

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 289.— Ed.

and in the joint struggle against autocracy and the treacherous policy of the liberal bourgeoisie. The proletariat, who was the principal force in the popular revolution, was to become the political leader of that bloc.

The idea of the hegemony of the proletariat in a democratic revolution, which Lenin put forward in the 1890s, was an outstanding contribution to the Marxist theory. It opened up new horizons in the struggle of the proletariat for democracy and socialism, and served as the starting point in Lenin's elaboration of his theory on the development of a bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution. The main weapon of the proletarian hegemony is a revolutionary working-class party, and therefore the Russian proletariat has to be rallied together around an independent political party armed with revolutionary theory, and capable of consistently defending its class interests and leading it ideologically. The establishment of such a party was, in Lenin's opinion, the primary task of the Russian Social-Democrats.

Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group laid only the theoretical foundation of Social-Democracy and had taken only the first step towards a merger with the workers' movement. Lenin pointed out that in 1884-1894 the Russian Social-Democrats "existed without a working-class movement, and as a political party it was at the embryonic stage of development".* Now a new and decisive step had to be taken — scientific socialism was to be combined with the spontaneous workers' movement and the working-class's isolated bursts of economic struggle were to be transformed into a conscious class struggle against autocracy and the bourgeoisie. This was not only the national, but also the international duty of the Russian proletariat. "International capital," Lenin remarked, "has already stretched out its hand to Russia. The Russian workers are stretching out their hands to the international labour movement."**

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is To Be Done?" *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 517.—*Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 109.—*Ed.*

Commenting on 'the sharp turn in legal journalism and the appearance of Marxist works in censored publications, Lenin wrote that "these literary activities of the Russian Marxists were the direct forerunners of active proletarian struggle, of the famous St. Petersburg strikes of 1896, which ushered in an era of steadily mounting workers' movement — the most potent factor in the whole of our revolution".* The mass workers' movement firmly refuted the dogmas of old peasant socialism and, confirming the correctness of the Social-Democrats' general orientation, pushed practical matters to the fore, namely, the organisation of the class struggle of the proletariat and mass agitation among the workers.

Now that the proletarian movement was beginning to spread, it was no longer possible to limit work only to propaganda in study circles, among narrow sections of progressive workers; it was necessary to draw "political issues out of the 'stuffy studies of the intelligentsia' into the street, into the midst of the workers and labouring classes."

At one time the Social-Democratic study circles were necessary and played a positive role. But the growing workers' movement went beyond their narrow framework and called for a change in tactics. Lenin explained that the Social-Democrats should gain operational freedom and, while continuing to teach Marxism in study circles, should also begin agitation in the very midst of the working class and direct its economic and political struggle. On his arrival in St. Petersburg, Lenin immediately put the question of extending their influence over the masses before the local Marxists. Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, Lenin's close associate, recollected: "Having found his bearings among us, Vladimir Ilyich did not lose any time in revolutionising our activities. First of all he demanded a transition from 'excessively detailed' studies with small groups of selected workers to work among broader sections of the St.

* V. I. Lenin, "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 94.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 338.— *Ed.*

Petersburg proletariat, i. e., a transition from propaganda to agitation.”*

According to Lenin, agitation among the workers means that the Social-Democrats should take part in all the spontaneous manifestations of the working-class struggle, in all skirmishes between the workers and the capitalists. “Our task,” Lenin wrote, is “to merge our activities with the practical, everyday questions of working-class life, ... to develop among the workers consciousness of their solidarity, consciousness of the common interests and common cause of all the Russian workers as a united working class that is part of the international army of the proletariat.”**

In his pamphlet “The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats” Lenin summed up the practical experience of the Russian Marxists of the 1890s. He comprehensively substantiated the indivisible unity of the socialist and democratic tasks facing the working class and the close link between economic and political agitation. “In conducting *agitation* among the workers on their immediate *economic* demands, the Social-Democrats inseparably link this with agitation on the immediate political needs,” he wrote.*** There is not a single issue of the proletariat’s economic life that could not be used for economic agitation, and there is not a single issue in the political sphere that could not serve for political agitation. These two forms of agitation are forged together in the activities of the Social-Democrats as the two sides of a coin.

Lenin warned against disrupting the unity of economic and political struggle, against a lop-sided infatuation with the economic struggle which ignored the great importance of democratic issues of the political struggle. The economic and political agitation, he pointed out, are equally important in developing the class self-awareness of the proletariat and in leading its

* *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 2, p. 16.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, “The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 329.— *Ed.*

*** V. I. Lenin, “The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 332.— *Ed.*

class struggle. Both types of agitation awaken the workers' consciousness, organise, discipline and educate them in the spirit of the joint struggle for socialist ideals. While warning against the absolutisation of the economic struggle, Lenin also stressed its importance, for this struggle by the proletariat aimed "at improving" its "material conditions ... inevitably becomes a war not against individuals, but against a *class*".*

Lenin's pamphlet entitled "Explanation of the Law on Fines Imposed on Factory Workers", written in 1895, is a splendid example of a masterful combination of economic and political agitation. Lenin convincingly proved that, by rousing the proletariat to the struggle to make factory and works administration abide by the law, it was possible not only to launch economic agitation, but also to disseminate political knowledge among the masses and to explain to them in simple language the principal ideas of Marxist theory.

Lenin's pamphlet "The New Factory Law", which he wrote while living in exile in 1897, testifies to the fact that he considered the explanation of factory legislation of great importance for developing the workers' political consciousness. He showed that the Law of 2 June, 1897, on reducing the working hours to eleven and a half was a result of the strikes staged by the St. Petersburg proletariat during 1895-1897. Though the concession the government was compelled to make was negligible in itself, Lenin saw its importance in the fact that it had been "*won* from the police government by the united and class-conscious workers".** Lenin's pamphlets "The Explanation of the Law on Fines Imposed on Factory Workers" and "The New Factory Law" are fine examples of popular literature written for the workers. They stimulated the workers' struggle to satisfy their economic demands and at the same time did much to awaken political consciousness among the proletarian masses.

* V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 299.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The New Factory Law", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 302.— *Ed.*

The question of the content of propaganda and agitation raised by Lenin was prompted by the situation itself, and by the needs of the workers' movement. The implementation of Lenin's propositions by himself and by his associates in the St. Petersburg and other Leagues of Struggle enriched the entire Russian workers' and Social-Democratic movement with the practical experience of agitation.

In his works written in the 1890s, Lenin created a solid theoretical and political base for the workers' movement in Russia and defined the immediate tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats aimed at rallying the working class around its Marxist vanguard ideologically and organisationally.

He also repeatedly urged the need to create a revolutionary Marxist Party relying on the mass workers' movement. Our activity, he said, is mostly and primarily oriented towards factory workers. The creation of a consolidated, revolutionary organisation among the workers is our first and foremost task. Rejecting the Blanquist traditions current among the Narodniks, Lenin pointed out that the struggle for democracy and socialism should be waged not by a group of conspirators, but by a revolutionary party rooted in the workers' movement, and that this struggle "must consist not in organising conspiracies, but in educating, disciplining and organising the proletariat."* This is precisely the direction in which the practical activities of the Russian Social-Democrats developed towards the end of the 19th century, a period which saw the birth of the mass workers' movement in Russia. Thanks to the efforts of Lenin and his comrades-in-arms, the mass workers' movement gradually merged with the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat.

* V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 341.— *Ed.*

Chapter Two

THE ST. PETERSBURG LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

In the 1890s, St. Petersburg with its suburbs was a major hub of factory industry. Over the previous decade alone, 209 works and factories had been built in the St. Petersburg Gubernia. As the number of industrial enterprises grew, the army of the proletariat expanded, too. In 1890, about 10 per cent of the country's industrial workers were concentrated in the St. Petersburg industrial area; 90 per cent of them were employed in the city and its suburbs.

The St. Petersburg working class was a legitimate heir to the revolutionary traditions of the previous generations of fighters for the people's cause. By the mid-1890s, it had accumulated considerable experience in its own movement, too.

The proletariat's struggle was caused by cruel economic oppression, the arbitrariness of factory owners, the lack of political rights, and the unbearable working conditions. Strikes occurred more and more often. At the same time, the workers were striving to gain general knowledge and comprehend socialist theory.

In the winter of 1889-90, there were about two dozen workers' study circles in St. Petersburg. They were guided by Social-Democratic intellectuals and, sometimes, by advanced workers. As the number of these circles increased, it became necessary to co-ordinate their activities. Meetings of workers with representatives of the Social-Democratic intelligentsia took place beyond the Narva Gate and in the Vasilyevsky Ostrov district, and the decision was adopted to establish a central city workers' study circle consisting of representatives of the district groups.

The central circle of the intelligentsia was represented in the central city study circle by V. S. Golubev, and after he was arrested, by M. I. Brusnev. From the district workers' circles, the most respected participants of the Social-Democratic

movement were elected — F. A. Afanasyev (known as Father), a weaver from Voronin's mill; Ye. A. Klimanov, a blacksmith at the Expedition for making banknotes, stamps and other state papers; N. D. Bogdanov, a metal worker at the map-printing factory; G. A. Mefodyev, a turner at the Warsaw Railway shops; P. N. Yevgrafov, a fitter at the Novy harbour; V. V. Buyanov, a lathe operator at the Putilov Works; and V. V. Fomin, a turner at the Baltiisky Works. Regular lessons of the central study circle were as a rule conducted at Fomin's flat, and sometimes at Afanasyev's, Klimanov's, or Yevgrafov's, too. Later, this Social-Democratic association, set up through the joint efforts of the advanced workers and Marxist intellectuals and having a Marxist political orientation, went under the name of Brusnev's group after one of its organisers.

In 1891, the group which had carried on strictly secret activities up till that time, announced its existence by participating in a demonstration on the occasion of the funeral of N. V. Shelgunov, a democratic writer, and by organising the first May Day illegal workers' meeting in St. Petersburg. After many of its members had been arrested in 1892, Brusnev's group ceased to exist.

Despite the blow the police dealt at the Social-Democratic movement, the revolutionary workers who escaped arrest, again formed a central workers' study circle, which was joined by V. A. Shelgunov, K. M. Norinsky, I. I. Keiser, and G. M. Fisher. The efforts of its members were directed at restoring the workers' circles and providing propagandists to lead them. In the second half of 1892 and the early 1893, Marxist workers' study circles were organised in all city districts.

LENIN'S ARRIVAL IN ST. PETERSBURG AND THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN THE CITY

In the autumn of 1893, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin) arrived in St. Petersburg. He was a well-educated young man of 23, a convinced Marxist. As soon as he arrived in Russia's

political centre, he set about putting into effect his plan to create an independent proletarian party.

St. Petersburg Marxists were not united into a single organisation at that time; there were several Social-Democratic groups, and Marxist propaganda was not tied up with the country's political life, or with the tasks of the proletariat's struggle. The most vigorous activities were carried out by a study circle set up in 1892 by S. I. Radchenko, a student of the Technological Institute; among its members were his fellow-students G. M. Krzhizhanovsky and V. V. Starkov. Soon the circle was joined by G. B. Krasin, a former member of Brusnev's group, who had returned from an exile, and the students A. L. Malchenko, M. K. Nazvanov and P. K. Zaporozhets. In 1893, A. A. Vaneyev and M. A. Silvin, who came from Nizhny Novgorod, also joined the group.

N. K. Krupskaya, a teacher at the Kornilov school where lectures were given on Sundays, was also involved with this group. In 1890, she studied works by Marx and Engels in the study circle run by the Technological Institute students Ya. P. Korobko and R. E. Klasson, and became a member of Brusnev's group. After the group was crushed, she got in touch with Krasin and Radchenko and worked actively in their circle.

All the members of this circle guided workers' study circles: Krzhizhanovsky led one beyond the Narva Gate, and Vaneyev at the Putilov Works and the Rubber Mill, Silvin among the New Admiralty shipbuilders, and Starkov in the village of Tentelevka and in Glazovaya Street. They also conducted individual studies with more advanced workers.

From time to time, the students discussed the practical matters involved in the circle's activities. Each member reported on his study circle — how many workers enlisted, how often they came to the studies, and what interested them. Yet everybody understood that they themselves were not adequately grounded in Marxism and were studying the theory of scientific socialism in isolation from Russian reality.

The study circle of the Technological Institute students propagated Marxist ideology, maintained relations with the

St. Petersburg proletariat and enjoyed great respect among the foremost workers. Among the Marxists it was known as the Central Group for Leading the Workers' Movement.

In 1893, a new Social-Democratic study circle was organised by a student, I. V. Chernyshev, at the same Technological Institute. Among its members were F. V. Lengnik, L. K. Martens, Ye. G. Bogatyryov and N. G. Malishevsky. They were known as the Young, not to be confused with the members of Radchenko's circle, who were called the Old. The majority of the members of the new circle joined the Social-Democratic movement in that same year, 1893. The Young put every effort into competing with the Old for influence over the workers' study circles, but all to no avail.

In late 1892-early 1893, a third students' study circle emerged in Russia's capital, which was joined by students from the Military Medical Academy such as K. M. Takhtarev, A. F. Nikitin, P. A. Bogoraz, N. A. Alexeyev, V. N. Katin-Yartsev, and others. They studied the works of Marx and Engels, and the working-class movement in the West, but their work consisted only in dissemination of knowledge.

An important part in the rapprochement between the intelligentsia and the workers was played by schools where lectures were read on Sundays, in which advanced young workers studied; while imparting elementary general knowledge to them, the lecturers also got them acquainted with the ideas of scientific socialism. Quite famous among these schools was the Smolenskaya (Kornilov) school situated beyond the Neva Gate, at which about 600 workers studied. They were taught by members of the Old's circle, who worked actively to consolidate the Marxists' relations with the vanguard workers.

As the country's socio-political life showed signs of invigoration, the Narodniks became active, too. At the end of 1891, a Narodnaya Volya group was formed in St. Petersburg. Making use of old Narodnik connections, it launched propaganda of its views among the workers. In the late 1893-early 1894, a discussion took place between Narodniks and Marxists, in which advanced workers also participated. The discussion made the workers ever more convinced that the Narodniks' views were erroneous.

When evaluating the workers' participation in the discussions between Marxists and the Narodnaya Volya group members, Lenin wrote: "Those advanced workers were Social-Democrats; many of them even took a personal part in the disputes between the Narodnaya Volya adherents and the Social-Democrats that typified the transition of the Russian revolutionary movement from peasant and conspiratorial socialism to working-class socialism."*

Despite the defeat they sustained in the first dispute, the Narodniks continued their attacks on the Social-Democrats. The St. Petersburg Social-Democrats decided to draw more workers into the next discussion. About twenty people came, representing all districts of the capital, among them were V. A. Shelgunov, I. I. Keiser, A. Fisher, S. I. Funtikov, I. I. Yakovlev, A. P. Ilyin. This discussion also proved that St. Petersburg proletarians were certainly being won over to Marxist views.

The ties between the Social-Democratic workers and the circle of the Old were consolidated in the struggle against Narodism. A foundation was being laid, on which a single Social-Democratic organisation was formed subsequently in the city.

On the recommendation of the Nizhny Novgorod Marxists, Lenin established contact with Radchenko's Marxist study circle. His first meeting with its members took place at Krzhizhansky's and Starkov's flat; Krasin and Radchenko were also present. The Petersburg Marxists told Lenin about the way propaganda was being conducted among the workers in the city. It was amateurish and involved a small section of advanced workers. The study circle members did not tie up Marxist theory with the vital political tasks facing the working class, or apply Marx's teaching to explain the country's economic and political situation, or draw practical revolutionary conclusions. This was primarily due to the weakness of the theoretical, organisational, and practical work in the Old's group.

* V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 260.—Ed.

At the very first meeting, Lenin, while criticising some aspects of the circle's activities, laid special stress on the fact that it was divorced from the workers' movement. He called on the circle's members to analyse the diverse aspects of life in Russia from the viewpoint of Marx's theory rather than study Marxism in an abstract way.

All those attending the meeting accepted Lenin's suggestion and each of them selected a subject for theoretical study. The first report, on Vorontsov's work *Our Directions*, was made by Silvin, but it proved to be superficial and contained insufficient factual data. Krasin offered to read a report on markets for discussion at the next meeting. The question of markets, of the fate of capitalism in Russia greatly interested the Russian progressively-minded public.

Krasin read his report from a copybook with Lenin's critical remarks in the margin. It was essentially a summary of a chapter from the second volume of Marx's *Capital*, a dry, dogmatic exposition, having no bearing on the economic processes under way in Russia.

After Krasin finished, Lenin took the floor. He criticised the reporter for the abstract way he had presented the development of capitalism, and for not analysing Russia's economic and political development.

In November 1893, Lenin prepared a report "On the So-Called Market Question". Relying on the Marxist theory of reproduction and an analysis of statistical data, he traced the process of the disintegration of simple commodity economy and its transformation into capitalist economy. He delivered a shattering blow at the Narodnik thesis that the internal market for capitalist industry was shrinking, and showed the absurdity of their assertion that Russia had its own path to follow, proving that capitalism in Russia was not an accident, but a natural stage in social development.

Lenin's report greatly impressed the St. Petersburg Marxists. The market question in Lenin's interpretation, Krupskaya recalled later, "was posed in an extremely concrete fashion and was tied up with the interests of the masses; living Marxism, considering phenomena in their concrete surroundings

and in their evolution, was felt in the whole approach”*.

The report was a fine example of a creative approach to Marxist theory. His very first speeches brought Lenin recognition and won him a great popularity with the revolutionaries. The St. Petersburg Marxists came to rally around him. “Here he is our leader, our theoretician, we shall not be lost while led by him, that was what each of us thought,” Silvín recalled, “and we were overjoyed that it was in our circle, in our organisation that this brilliant mind had appeared.”

Lenin firmly guided his comrades-in-arms from an abstract-dogmatic study of works by Marx and Engels to concrete reality, and onto the path of vigorous revolutionary activity. He demanded that they did not limit their work to teaching in the circles and conducting individual studies with those workers who were advanced in politics, but that they should try to establish relations with the proletarian masses and study their living and working conditions. The small group of the Old won over to its side more and more supporters, strengthened its influence among the revolutionaries and stepped up its struggle against Narodism.

At first Lenin only delivered speeches exposing Narodism. His talks with workers, his open polemics with the Narodniks in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod consolidated the Marxists’ positions in these cities. But it was not enough to deal a final blow at the liberal Narodnik ideology.

In the spring and summer of 1894, Lenin wrote *What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*. That was in fact a manifesto of Russian revolutionary Social-Democracy, in which the theoretical and programmatic-tactical principles, and the political tasks of the Russian Marxist working-class party were formulated. Lenin not only defended Marxist theory from attacks by liberal Narodniks, but developed and applied it in the new historical conditions obtaining, elaborating on a number of new problems in philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism.

* *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 1, p. 223.— Ed.

Lenin completed the first part of the work in April 1894, and the remaining two parts, by the summer same year. The book could not be published legally, but only in a strictly conspiratorial way. The first part, criticising the Narodniks' philosophical views, was hectographed in the spring of 1894, with practical matters being organised by Radchenko. The printed pages were brought to the flat of Vaneyev and Silvin, who stitched them up and took them to the Technological Institute to be disseminated from over there. The booklet was immediately spread and was a great success. A second printing of this part was promptly planned and accomplished in July by Vaneyev. Soon it was reprinted by the Moscow Social-Democrats, too.

After the first part of the work came out, Lenin found it more expedient to print the third part next, in which the political programme and practical tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats were expounded. Soon it was printed in St. Petersburg; the second part, whose publication had been thus postponed, was never printed in St. Petersburg.

Local Party organisations multiplied the book by every means at their disposal: they copied it by hand and typed it, hectographed and screened it, etc. As a result, it was extensively read in the revolutionary circles of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Vladimir, Vilna, Kiev, Chernigov, Poltava, Penza, Rostov-on-Don, Tomsk, Riga, and other cities. It was also read by Social-Democratic organisations abroad, in particular, among members of the Emancipation of Labour group. "After the book was printed," S. I. Mickiewicz wrote, "Vladimir Ilyich became still more popular and a recognised authority among the Marxists. The young Russian Marxist trend realised that in his person it had acquired a gigantic political and practical force."

In order to crush Narodnik ideology completely and make use of the opportunities that were at the disposal of legal Marxists, the revolutionary Social-Democrats formed a temporary alliance with these bourgeois hangers-on. As a result, Lenin noted, there occurred unification of the "manifestly heterogeneous elements under a common flag to fight the com-

mon enemy (the obsolete social and political world outlook)".* The alliance was formed on condition that the theory and practice of legal Marxism would be freely criticised, as before.

In 1894, several discussions took place between St. Petersburg Marxists, on the one hand, and Struve and his followers, on the other. Lenin summed them up in his article "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book", in which he gave a devastating criticism of legal Marxism, upheld the revolutionary essence of Marx and Engels' teaching, and made a considerable contribution to the theory of scientific communism. The article played an important part in the struggle of the Russian Social-Democrats for the liberation of the workers from the ideological influence of the bourgeoisie and liberal Narodism.

Two thousand copies of the collection *Materials for a Characterisation of Our Economic Development*, which contained Lenin's article criticising Struve, were printed and it was handed in for the censor's approval (in April 1895). The censor decreed that the book was "harmful" and that the entire batch be destroyed. About one hundred copies were saved, which had been secretly taken from the stitching shop before the order was issued. The book was distributed among Social-Democratic study circles and groups. It was not only read by Marxists in St. Petersburg, but also in Moscow, Kazan, Tula, Ekaterinoslav, and other cities, and in Western Europe, too. In May 1895, a copy was brought to the British Museum. The Emancipation of Labour group had it at their disposal as well.

Lenin's intense theoretical, propagandist and organising activities in St. Petersburg marked the start of a new stage in Marxist development. Defending Marxism from attacks by the liberal Narodniks and Struvists, and elaborating on it to allow it to be applied in the new historical conditions, Lenin put forward and substantiated the principal task facing the Social-Democratic movement of the 1890s, namely, that of combining the theory of scientific socialism and the workers'

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 361.—Ed.

movement, and creating a Marxist Party of the Russian proletariat. All the activities of the St. Petersburg revolutionary Marxists were concentrated on the accomplishment of this task.

THE SETTING UP OF THE ST. PETERSBURG LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE

By the mid-1890s St. Petersburg had not only become the centre of Marxist thought, but also of rallying all the Social-Democratic forces into a single organisation. The unification movement was led by Lenin and the closely consolidated group of the Old he guided. Initially, it included S. I. Radchenko, V. V. Starkov, G. M. Krzhizhanovsky, P. K. Zaporozhets, A. L. Malchenko, N. K. Krupskaya, Z. P. Nevzorova, A. A. Yakubova, S. P. Nevzorova, L. N. Radchenko, A. A. Vanev, M. A. Silvin, and Ya. P. Ponomarev.

In the winter of 1893-94, under Lenin's guidance, the group of the Old expanded and consolidated its ties with the workers; some of them Lenin taught individually. Among his pupils were V. A. Shelgunov, G. M. Fisher, and I. I. Yakovlev, lathe operators at the Obukhov Works, the Siemens and Galske, and the New Admiralty, respectively, and others.

This is how Shelgunov describes his first meeting with Lenin. "In the autumn of 1893 I was sitting at a conspiratorial flat waiting for a man from the Volga who wanted to see me.

"A young man of medium height, wearing an old rust-coloured coat, entered the room. He had a small, reddish beard; his forehead was high and wide. Having taken a good look at me, he held out his hand to me and introduced himself:

"I'm Ulyanov."

"He spoke but little and listened very attentively to me, as if taking stock of me and assessing my capabilities as a revolutionary. That same day he invited me to go and visit him...

"He took a real interest in St. Petersburg workers, asking who attended the study circles, and whether I had acquaintances among them... I named several people I knew."

When he met workers, Lenin asked them about the state of affairs at their factories, about the wages and fines, working and living conditions, and the working hours. He showed interest in all aspects of the workers' life. At the same time, he also asked his pupils to collect information on the city's proletarian population.

The workers who studied in the circles he headed, admired Lenin's vast knowledge, his art as a lecturer, and his talent for explaining complicated issues of Marxist theory in simple, clear and comprehensive terms.

Babushkin, who studied *Capital* in a study circle led by Lenin, wrote: "Lenin exposed to us this science from memory, without using any notes; he often tried to provoke objections on our part, or an argument, and then he spurred us on, making us prove to each other his own view of the given issue. Thus, our lectures always passed in a lively and interesting way, and we developed a habit of speaking in public; this method of studying was the best way of getting listeners to understand the matter. We all liked these lessons immensely and were always impressed by our lecturer's cleverness."* Lenin's popular lectures on political economy, his clear answers and apt characteristics were recalled by his pupils for a long time afterwards. In the course of the studies, he constantly drew listeners into discussions on current political issues, so that the lesson often turned into a heated debate, with all those present taking an active part.

Lenin always tied up lessons in Marxist theory with revolutionary practice and taught his comrades-in-arms to do the same. He asked his pupils to collect information about workers' conditions at the enterprises and try to analyse the data obtained using the propositions contained in certain chapters of *Capital* that they were studying at the time. Babushkin recollected: "We were given a list of questions specially prepared by our lecturer, which called for a careful study and observation of the situation at the works and factories."**

* *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 2, pp. 36—37.— *Ed.*

** *Ibid.* p. 37.— *Ed.*

To help the workers collect purposeful information Lenin drew up a questionnaire, which was used by the Marxist circles in St. Petersburg and even by provincial Social-Democratic groups. The questions concerned the number and composition of the workers, hiring terms, working and living conditions, the working hours, the wages, and the form of remuneration. Special attention was paid to information on abuses on the part of the management, the overtime and work on holidays, cheating, fines and deductions, and maltreatment by foremen and factory-owners. Considerable space was also given to the workers' family budget, expenditure on the food-stuffs, clothing and footwear, rent and taxes, and to the gap between the prices of goods at the market and in factory chops.

The questionnaire helped bring the propaganda of Marxist theory closer to vital issues. The information collected was summed up and used by the propagandists, both in lectures and speeches, and in printed matter.

Lenin's group persistently expanded the network of Marxist study circles among the St. Petersburg proletariat. An important part was played in this by advanced Marxist workers like V. A. Shelgunov, I. V. Babushkin, V. I. Zinoviev, I. I. Yakovlev, V. A. Knyazev, and A. P. Ilyin. They established close ties with those workers whom they considered as most capable of revolutionary activities underground, circulated newspapers with relevant articles and illegal books among the workers, and got to know their moods and attitude to what they read. The most dependable workers were drawn into the study circles; new circles were also organised, which were sometimes even guided by the Marxist workers themselves. "That period was the most intensive in our mental development," Babushkin recollected. "Every moment was precious, every hour free from work was registered and accounted for in advance, and every week was planned similarly. When I think of that time now, I just cannot understand from whence the tremendous energy needed for such an intense way of life was derived."

Very popular among the workers was the Smolenskaya school, where members of Lenin's group, N. K. Krupskaya,

Z. P. Nevzorova-Krzhizhanovskaya, S. P. Nevzorova-Shesternina, and A. A. Yakubova lectured on Sundays.

Lenin showed a constant interest in the work of that school. He initiated a meeting between the school's teachers and members of the Social-Democratic group; subsequently, almost all the teachers who attended that meeting joined the Social-Democrats.

Through the efforts of the Marxist teachers, the school became a genuine seat of political enlightenment for the workers. Under the cover of geography, they were taught elementary political economy, and at history lessons, the history of the revolutionary movement. Even lessons in arithmetic were used for political propaganda — the sums were based on facts, exposing the system of capitalist exploitation and showing how capitalist profit was formed. The worker F. I. Bodrov recalled that at Krupskaya's lessons "the consciousness of the correctness of the great cause of emancipating the working class was implanted in his mind by the hand of a master".

Lenin considered strengthening and expanding ties with the workers of great importance. In the winter of 1894-95, the activities of the group of the Old were modified to serve this purpose better. The propagandists were distributed by districts; they were not only obliged to conduct lessons in the circles, but also to study their district, the moods prevailing among the workers, and the state of affairs at the works and factories. Once a week, the members of Lenin's group met to exchange opinions. Krupskaya recalls: "Vladimir Ilyich asked everybody a lot of questions, about the way he lectured, what the workers said, etc." Lenin taught his comrades how to conduct secret activity, an art in which he himself was a past master: how to code a message, set up a secret flat, organise protection of an illegal meeting. He recommended them to reduce meetings, empty talk, etc. to an absolute minimum.

Revolutionary practice gave birth to new, Lenin-style methods of Social-Democratic work. The creative approach by St. Petersburg Marxists to studying Marxist theory, their ability to apply it to concrete phenomena in Russian reality, their extensive connections with works and factories, and utter

commitment to the cause—all prepared the ground for a change in tactics. The upgrading of the workers' movement in the 1890s called for the transfer from Marxist propaganda in small circles of advanced workers to political agitation among the proletarian masses using vital issues of their everyday needs.

Lenin stressed that economic agitation must be tied in with the great historic tasks facing the Russian Social-Democrats. The prerequisites had already taken shape in St. Petersburg, and the cadres capable of accomplishing this task had already been created.

Thus, in the autumn of 1894 Lenin proved the need for the change from propaganda to agitation and defined its general thrust. Not all Marxists, however, were agreed on that point. Passionate debates ensued. The opponents of going over to agitation maintained that the new tactics would impair the system of underground activities, cause mass arrests and bring about chaos in the Social-Democratic movement.

An erroneous view of the content of agitation had also become manifest. Some Social-Democrats, who opted for mass agitation, reduced it to economic issues alone. They put forward the theory that the working-class movement had developed "by stages"; at the first stage, the proletariat waged the struggle solely for the satisfaction of its economic needs, at the second stage it began to realise that it cannot achieve this goal without political struggle and only at the third stage did it launch political actions. They suggested that agitation be adjusted to the same pattern, i. e., at the first stage it should be of an economic nature, while the struggle for political demands should be put off to the distant future. This theory was a manifestation of the nascent Economism, an opportunist trend among Russian Social-Democracy.

In the course of discussions, criticism was lavished on the opportunist concept exposed in the booklet "On Agitation", and it was decided that, while going on with propaganda in the study circles, agitation should be started among the masses, based on their vital needs.

It was decided to begin massive agitation by demanding

that the authorities should "abide by the law". The information collected with the help of a questionnaire showed that even the tsarist laws, which did, to a certain extent, call for the protection of the workers' rights, were grossly violated by the industrialists. The St. Petersburg Marxists made use of these facts to incite the workers to stand up for their legitimate rights. Lenin wrote about that time as follows: "The *early Social-Democrats of that period zealously carried on economic agitation... They did not regard this as their sole task. On the contrary, from the very beginning they set for Russian Social-Democracy the most far-reaching historical tasks, in general, and the task of overthrowing the autocracy, in particular.*"*

The first practical steps towards new tactics were made by Lenin's group in December 1894, in connection with the workers' outbreaks at Semyannikov's works caused by a delay in paying wages.

These events served as a pretext for issuing a leaflet "To the Workers of Semyannikov's Works", written by Lenin and I. V. Babushkin. who also took it upon himself to distribute it. The leaflet was copied out by hand, all in block letters, and made a great impression on the workers. It marked the changeover of the St. Petersburg Marxists from propaganda in the study circles to agitation among the proletarian masses.

Early in 1895, another leaflet appeared, hectographed this time. It was written by G. M. Krzhizhanovsky and addressed to the workers of the Nevsky Works. The leaflet explained in popular form that it was necessary to work for rallying the workers and staging an onslaught against the capitalists. It also said that not only the capitalists, but the tsarist government, too, were the workers' enemies. "Factory-owners and the police," it said, "and the entire state administration — they are all one, and they are all against us." The leaflet called for organised action, explaining that that was the only way of securing the satisfaction of the workers' demands.

Lenin's group now reacted to all major manifestations of dis-

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 376.— *Ed.*

content among the workers, trying to guide the movement and impart to it a conscious, organised character; such an attitude on the part of the Social-Democrats to the working-class movement was new in principle.

Agitation was expanded in every possible way — by issuing leaflets and arranging talks with the workers, etc. Police reports noted that the Social-Democrats in St. Petersburg had stepped up their activities since February 1895. The Marxists made speeches to groups of workers more and more often at industrial enterprises. Meetings became a usual thing, at which advanced workers discussed matters involved in the preparation and carrying out of strikes, issuing and distributing leaflets, setting up new study circles and supplying them with illegal literature, and organising workers' funds to render assistance to those on strike.

The work in the study circles changed in accordance with the modified tactics of revolutionary activities. They were now made to serve the purposes of agitation, too. Among the foremost workers, the idea took firm root that they should not keep aloof from the life of the proletarian masses of the capital, but should actively interfere in it, taking into account the workers' needs and demands, and fighting against all violations of their rights.

The organisational structure of the Old's group was also improved; in fact, it was already functioning as the League of Struggle. Lenin paid particular attention to discipline, observing secrecy and good co-ordination of the group's activities. The duties of each of its members were carefully delineated; each of them was made responsible for a definite district.

Thus, the Social-Democrats, under Lenin's guidance, started out on the path of mass political agitation. This historic turn from Marxist propaganda in small study circles of advanced workers to mass political agitation was a genuinely important beginning undertaken by the St. Petersburg Marxists and of decisive significance for an upsurge in the working-class movement and the development of Revolutionary Social-Democracy in Russia.

At that time, the transition from propaganda to agitation

and the merger of the theory of scientific socialism and the mass workers' movement was a vital issue for Social-Democracy all over the country. This was the main issue at a conference of the representatives of Social-Democratic study circles and groups from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Vilna, which was convened in St. Petersburg in February 1895. The St. Petersburg Social-Democrats delegated Lenin and Krzhizhzhansky. As soon as the discussion started, controversies were revealed: T. M. Kopelzon, the representative of the Vilna Social-Democrats, and Ye. I. Sponti, from Moscow, insisted that, in conducting agitation among the masses, it was necessary to "keep to the economic ground mostly, until the masses mature sufficiently to understand political slogans". This idea was essentially consonant with the view A. Kremer expressed in his booklet "On Agitation".

Lenin determinedly rebuffed all these opportunist sorties aimed at reducing the working-class movement to a struggle for economic interests alone. He substantiated and upheld the Marxist proposition to the effect that it was necessary to combine the economic and political struggle.

Lenin's criticism of the views of Kopelzon and Sponti, who advocated the spontaneous workers' movement, was a matter of principle. The same opportunist positions were maintained by the Young in St. Petersburg — I. V. Chernyshev's and K. M. Takhtarev's groups, who considered that the Social-Democrats were not called to lead the workers' movement, but to be of "service" to it. The Young wanted to set up a workers' organisation that would only engage in economic struggle. Lenin's group opposed these opportunist views and plans in a most determined manner. Debates on the nature of mass agitation and the direction of the activities of the workers' organisation started a prolonged, consistent and principled struggle against opportunism among Russian Social-Democracy.

As the February conference also failed to reach agreement on sending abroad a delegate from the Social-Democratic circles for establishing contact with the Emancipation of Labour group, the St. Petersburg Marxists decided to send Lenin as their representative for talks with Plekhanov.

The need for firmer ties with the Emancipation of Labour group was dictated by the tasks facing the Russian Social-Democrats at the movement's new stage. It was essential to convince Plekhanov's group to intensify its publishing activities and organise a more regular supply of Social-Democratic literature to local study circles and groups, to help them consolidate their forces and fight for establishing a Marxist workers' party in Russia.

Lenin's trip abroad had to be postponed, however, because in March he fell ill with pneumonia. When he was well again, Lenin began to make preparations to go abroad. He took the necessary measures for the organisation to function smoothly during his absence. In April 1895, at a conference in Tsarskoye Selo, he compiled a plan for its activities; coding the correspondence and maintaining contacts was entrusted to Krupskaya.

On 25 April, 1895, Lenin left St. Petersburg. After spending a few days in Moscow he went abroad. In a letter to his mother dated May 2nd, he wrote: "This is my second day of travel abroad..."* As soon as he departed, the Police Department ordered its agency abroad to follow closely Vladimir Ulyanov's activities and communications.

In Switzerland Lenin met Plekhanov, Axelrod and other members of the Emancipation of Labour group. He informed them of the Social-Democratic movement in St. Petersburg and gave them new Marxist publications printed in Russia — *Materials for a Characterisation of Our Economic Development* and *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* — and several leaflets, which testified to the increased ideological and political maturity of Russian Social-Democracy.

Lenin had a profound respect for Plekhanov, the first Russian Marxist and organiser of the Emancipation of Labour group. Serious controversies were, however, revealed during the exchange of opinion between Lenin, on the one hand, and Plekhanov and Axelrod, on the other, on the prospects and

* V. I. Lenin, "To His Mother. May 14 (2), 1895", *Collected Works*, Vol. 37, p. 72.— Ed.

motive forces of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, and the role to be played in it by the peasantry and the liberal bourgeoisie. Plekhanov and Axelrod maintained that in the given historical period, the liberal bourgeoisie rather than the peasantry would be the proletariat's ally in the forthcoming bourgeois-democratic revolution, since the interests of the proletariat coincided with the principal interests of the liberal bourgeoisie. They overestimated part played by the latter, while underestimating the role of the peasantry. Axelrod recalled later that Plekhanov said to Lenin: "You are showing your back to the liberal, and we — our face."*

In spite of certain controversies with Plekhanov and Axelrod on tactical and organisational matters, Lenin reached an understanding with the Emancipation of Labour group on the joint publication of *Rabotnik* (The Worker), a popular collection of articles. On behalf of the Russian Social-Democrats, he promised to supply articles and information on the workers' movement in Russia. The agreement on the publication of the collection addressed to the mass of the Social-Democrats went beyond the framework of Social-Democratic activities conducted in St. Petersburg and was of great importance for the development of the Social-Democratic movement all over Russia.

Lenin made a great impression on the members of the Emancipation of Labour group with his serious manner, his business-like approach to the matters at hand, unpretentiousness and a talent as a political leader. Krzhizhanovsky in his *Reminiscences* described the content of one of Plekhanov's lost letters: "Many people from Russia came to see Plekhanov during the many years of his stay abroad, but, perhaps, he did not place as much hope in anyone as he did in the young Ulyanov."** This letter is also mentioned by Z. P. Nevzorova-Krzhizhanovskaya, as she describes Plekhanov's attitude to Lenin: "For the first time a man has arrived from Russia, who surprisingly combined

* *Correspondence of G. V. Plekhanov and P. B. Axelrod*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1925, pp. 270-71 (in Russian).— *Ed.*

** *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 2, p. 17.— *Ed.*

a profound theoretical grounding with active practicisism... This man is bound to play an important part in the revolutionary movement." And this is what Plekhanov wrote in a letter to Axelrod: "It is a stroke of good luck that there are such young men [like V. I. Lenin] in our revolutionary movement."

Lenin's meeting with the Emancipation of Labour group served it to establish more regular relations with Russia and invigorate its literary and publishing activities.

After a three-week stay in Switzerland, Lenin went to Paris where he met Paul Lafargue, an outstanding figure in the French and international workers' movement and the son-in-law of Karl Marx. Then he visited Berlin and made acquaintance there with Wilhelm Liebknecht, a founder of the German Social-Democratic Party, and other prominent leaders of that Party.

When abroad, Lenin studied the West-European revolutionary movement, the works of Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune, and other Marxist literature. When he stayed in Germany, he went to workers' meetings, and studied the work of Social-Democratic organisations. He put much effort into organising the dispatch of Marxist literature to Russia. It was his suggestion that the pages of illegal books be glued together as if they were the hard covers of legal books; in such a cover, for example, a report on the Breslau Congress of the German Social-Democratic Party was sent to Russia in 1895. Lenin wished very much to see Engels, but it proved impossible because of the latter's grave illness.

On 7 September, 1895, Lenin returned to Russia. As he was crossing the border, he managed to deceive the gendarmes who had been given orders to "examine his luggage carefully": he smuggled in illegal printed matter in a suitcase with a double bottom; it was subsequently distributed among the Social-Democratic groups and study circles. Lenin went straight from the border station to Vilna; then he visited Moscow and Orekhovo-Zuyevo, and established contacts with local Social-Democrats, making an agreement with them about assistance in publishing *Rabotnik* collection abroad. On 29 September, he arrived in St. Petersburg.

The chief of the Police Department stated that following Lenin's return, many "foreign revolutionary publications" appeared, and that "as he returned, the activities of the circle became more lively". The Police Department closely followed Lenin's every step.

In spite of that, Lenin's group continued its work successfully to establish a proletarian organisation in Russia — an embryo of a powerful revolutionary party, capable of leading the struggle against the autocracy and the bourgeoisie. It extended its ties with the workers, consolidated itself ideologically and gained in strength organisationally. Gradually, its nucleus was formed, consisting of the most experienced and respected members — Lenin, Starkov and Krzhizhanovsky. Lenin and his group maintained relations with Social-Democratic study circles through the district leaders: V. A. Shelgunov (Nevsky District), I. I. Yakovlev (Vasilyevsky Ostrov District) and B. I. Zinovyev (Moskovsko-Narvsky District). Characterising the organisation's structure in 1895, Lenin wrote: "...10-16 persons (committee). 20-30 workers' circles. Maximum, 100-150 ties."*

Meanwhile, besides Lenin's organisation, several independent Social-Democratic groups were active in St. Petersburg, although they did not enjoy as much influence among the workers — these were the Young group, a group of medical students, and a group led by Yu. O. Martov. The influence of Lenin's group had grown so much, however, that some leaders of the other Social-Democratic groups saw the futility of their independent existence. Martov, for example, established contact with Lenin's group through Radchenko and suggested that work be carried on in common. Talks followed, during which controversies on the organisational principles and the line of activities were revealed. Martov and his adherents came up against centralism and the observance of strict conspiracy, maintaining that agitation should mainly consist in inciting the struggle for the economic interests of the working

* V. I. Lenin, "Plan for an Article '1895 and 1905 (Short Parallel)'", *Collected Works*, Vol. 41, p. 137.— *Ed.*

class That testified, as Martov himself noted some time later, to the narrowness of the interests and prospects, and the lack of understanding the importance of establishing a revolutionary Marxist workers' party, an issue which preoccupied Lenin at that time Lenin sharply criticised Martov's erroneous propositions and produced such convincing arguments that Martov and his followers had to accept his viewpoint After unity of views on organisational, programmatic and tactical matters had been achieved, it was decided to admit Martov's group into Lenin's organisation

The group of the Young continued to act independently There was no question of its merger with Lenin's organisation, for they diverged on matters of principle Many of the Young held opportunist views, trying to reduce the proletariat's class struggle to that for economic demands alone Their views were an exact replica of those of the Vilna Social Democrats contained in the booklet "On Agitation" One more circumstance caused the Young to be regarded with caution Chernyshev's first aid was N N Mikhailov, a dentist, whom the St Petersburg Social Democrats suspected of being an agent provocateur, some time later this was proved to be true in December 1895, he helped the police to arrest the leaders of the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, and Lenin among them, too

The Social Democratic group of medical students, led by K M Takhtarev, also maintained that agitation should be of an economic nature They saw catering to the needs of the mass workers' movement as the main task of Social Democracy, denying their leading role in the class struggle

Chernyshev's and Takhtarev's groups joined the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class only in the summer of 1896, when the ranks of the Old thinned due to numerous arrests, while members of these groups themselves became substantially more "left" under the influence of the proletariat's mass actions, in particular, the general strike of the St Petersburg textile workers.

By the autumn of 1895, Lenin's group had completed the

unification of all the Social-Democratic circles in St. Petersburg that held revolutionary Marxist positions.

In late October-early November 1895, a meeting of St. Petersburg revolutionary Marxists was held on Lenin's initiative at which a joint city Social-Democratic organisation was finally formed. Lenin, Krzhizhanovsky, Starkov, Vaneyev, and Martov formed its nucleus — leading centre. Subsequently, this organisation was called the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

The circumstances called for improved forms of organisation and more precisely defined functions of the leading centre members. The organisational structure relied on the most important principle of the revolutionary proletarian party — that of democratic centralism.

However, the organisational principles suggested by Lenin were not agreed upon by all the Social-Democrats. Martov opposed centralism and strict conspiracy; Radchenko also declared that centralism would mean curbing the rights of the rank-and-file by its leadership. Twenty-five years later, recalling these controversies and debates on organisational matters, Lenin wrote in *"Left-Wing" Communism — an Infantile Disorder*: "There have always been attacks on the 'dictatorship of leaders' in our Party. The first time I heard such attacks, I recall, was in 1895, when, officially, no party yet existed, but a central group was taking shape in St. Petersburg, which was to assume the leadership of the district groups."* Objecting to Martov and Radchenko, Lenin proved that "primitive democracy" was impossible in Russia. Most of those present supported the organisational principles suggested by Lenin. The structure of the organisation was modified: a third element — Moskovsko-Narvskaya, Nevskaya and Zarechnaya district groups — was introduced in addition to the central group and the workers' study circles.

The district groups were to draw into the organisation new members with the consent of the leading centre, set up workers'

* V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing' Communism — an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 45.— Ed.

and students' study circles, supply them with illegal publications, collect information on the state of affairs in the corresponding district, etc. The district group led the activities of workers' circles, the primary cells which were no longer just circles for conducting propaganda: they have now become embryos of primary party organisations which were carrying on revolutionary work directly at enterprises. The circles' members, in addition to conducting propaganda, were also engaged in agitation and in organising the working-class movement.

The practical leadership of all the organisation's work was effected by its leading centre.

The illegal conditions in which operations were carried out called for centralisation combined with certain democratic principles. Lenin implanted strict discipline among the members of the League, respect for the higher bodies and the unconditional fulfilment of its directives. On his suggestion, accountability was introduced at all levels. The district groups had to report weekly to the centre on their activities. At the same time, the League of Struggle developed democratism, too, insofar as it was possible in the underground. Once a month at least, all the members of the district groups came to a meeting. From the autumn of 1895, meetings of representatives of the workers' circles were held by districts, as well as general meetings of elected workers' representatives from the districts and members of the League, at which the questions involved in the preparation and carrying out of strikes were discussed, the establishment of workers' mutual assistance funds to help the strikers, the distribution of leaflets, etc.

On Lenin's recommendation, strict conspiracy was observed in the League of Struggle, and each member was engaged in a special type of activity which consisted in conducting agitation, setting up study circles, disseminating illegal literature, studying the workers' conditions, taking care of secret flats, protecting meetings and lessons in the study circles, exposing agents provocateurs, supervising the work of libraries, maintaining hiding places for illegal publications, etc. Such division of responsibilities, on the one hand, did, to a certain extent, save the League from failures, and, on the other hand, guaran-

teed the active participation of all the organisation's members in revolutionary work.

On Lenin's initiative, any new member before being admitted had to undergo a test and so-called trial period. Lenin wrote on this score the following: "We are also aware that the preliminary period envisaged by our system during which the League of Struggle will collect the necessary information about individuals or groups offering their services and give them something to do by way of trial will be a very difficult one for many people eager to devote their energies to revolutionary work. But without his preliminary testing, revolutionary activity in present-day Russia is impossible."*

The League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was Russia's first Social-Democratic organisation which entered the path of combining scientific socialism with mass workers' movement, and the struggle for the proletariat's economic interests with the political struggle against the autocracy and the capitalists; Lenin was its ideologist, organiser and leader.

The organisation started vigorous activities among the St. Petersburg proletariat, trying to draw into the orbit of its influence as many workers as it could. It maintained contacts with more than 70 enterprises in the city, including almost all of its big industrial works employing over a thousand workers each. In 1891-1895, these accounted for more than 90 per cent of the strikes staged by the proletariat.

The League relied on the advanced workers. Organisers from among the workers were acting at St. Petersburg works and factories; they collected information, distributed leaflets and other illegal printed matter, and established ties between the district groups of the League and the enterprises. Babushkin recollected: "The matters were supervised locally by the workers, who passed on literature to all the works and factories to be distributed there. There was only one such worker at each works and factory. He knew where, and how much printed mat-

* V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 350-51.— *Ed.*

ter was needed, the day on which leaflets were distributed, etc. Resourcefulness was the most indispensable quality, for a host of questions had to be dealt with on the spot as they cropped up in the study circles, at the works and factories, and at schools."

The influence of the League of Struggle among the revolutionary-minded intellectuals was also growing. An agreement was reached with the St. Petersburg Narodnaya Volya group organisation, many of whose members had by that time notably approached the Marxists. In 1895, the Narodnaya Volya was dissolved, some of its members joining the Social-Democrats and others the newly formed party of Socialist-Revolutionaries. That evolution towards Marxism, according to the former Narodnaya Volya member N. Meshcheryakov, was "partly due to Social-Democratic books and other printed matter which had to be carefully studied in order to speak at discussions, but mostly due to Marx, whose works I read over and over again; yet the main reason was life itself, which mercilessly smashed the Narodnik illusions".

**THE LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE
AT THE HEAD OF THE MASS STRIKE
OF ST. PETERSBURG WORKERS.
AN EMBRYO OF THE PARTY OF A NEW TYPE**

After the League of Struggle had been finally established, the scope of the agitation it conducted among the proletarian masses considerably increased. During November and December of 1895, it issued no less than 11 leaflets (the overall number of leaflets issued in 1895 and 1896 was no less than 70). When writing leaflets, the League members proceeded from the workers' daily needs and the actual situation at one factory or another, and tried, as soon as possible, to go over to political slogans. The leaflets, reflecting the workers' vital interests, were a great success. As soon as the workers saw, Lenin recollected later, that the Social-Democratic circles "desired to, and could, supply them with a new kind of leaflet that told

the whole truth about their miserable existence, about their unbearably hard toil, and their lack of rights, they began to send in, actually flood us with, correspondence from factories and workshops".* Those "denunciatory writings" had a great impact on the workers at industrial enterprises.

The leaflets issued by the League of Struggle told the workers about the situation at the works and factories, the strikes and their outcome. They formulated the workers' demands and called for organised struggle and proletarian solidarity. The official press ignored the workers' question, pretending it did not exist in Russia at all. So leaflets issued by the League were in fact a primary type of working-class periodicals, serving as a kind of a newspaper for the workers.

Due to its close ties with the capital's industrial enterprises and complete awareness of the situation there, the League of Struggle was able to render assistance to the workers and lead the movement against economic oppression and for political rights. At the end of October and the beginning of November 1895, the economic situation of the workers at the Thornton factory took a sharp turn for the worse. They lived in crowded, dirty, stuffy barracks, paying an enormous rent for these poor living quarters. The working day lasted 14 and a half hours. The wages had been lowered several times, and were now seven roubles per month on the average for weavers, and down to 3 roubles 20 kopecks for many other categories of workers. The system of fines was outrageous, and arbitrariness on the part of the management knew no bounds. The workers were only allowed to leave the factory barracks on holidays, and even then they had to be back by 11 p. m. sharp; and they were obliged to buy their food and all the things they needed in the factory shop. As a result of all this, resentment was mounting among the workers, and a strike was imminent.

The League of Struggle convened a conference of district groups representatives to discuss the preparations for the strike and carrying it out, and to obtain information on the situation

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 398.—
Ed.

at other industrial enterprises in the city. The conference opened with reports on the situation in the districts in general and at individual works and factories in particular. Two weavers from the Thornton factory were specially invited to the conference, and Lenin put apt questions to them, so that he got all the information he needed. The League helped the workers formulate their demands, having hectographed a special leaflet, which was distributed at the factory early in November.

The Thornton factory weavers went on strike. In the early hours of November 7th the police arrested 13 strikers, but the workers were not to be intimidated and refused to go back to work. Only after the factory inspector assured them that their demands would be met and the workers arrested set free did the workers call off the strike.

The inspector's promises, however, were not kept. Then Lenin, with the help of the factory workers, who participated in the Social-Democratic movement, and Krupskaya, who had paid a visit to the factory barracks, wrote a leaflet "To the Working Men and Women of the Thornton Factory", in which concrete economic demands were organically combined with the proletariat's general class tasks. The leaflet reminded the workers about the 6th and 7th November, which were fresh in everybody's memory, when the weavers "by their solid resistance to the employer's pressure have proved that at a difficult moment there are still people in our midst who can uphold our common interests as workers, that our worthy employers have not yet succeeded in turning us for all time into the miserable slaves of their bottomless purses".*

The leaflet showed the ways and means of struggle which would lead the workers to victory: "Let us, then, comrades, stand firm and steadfast and carry on to the very end, let us remember that we can improve our conditions only by our common and concerted efforts."** It explained that the factory owners would resort to all kind of ruses to split the workers'

* V. I. Lenin, "To the Working Men and Women of the Thornton Factory", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 81.— *Ed.*

** *Ibid.*— *Ed.*

ranks and prevent their joint action, and that therefore every worker should take part in the struggle led by the weavers.

The strike at the Thornton factory, led by the League of Struggle, paved the way for a new upsurge of the strike movement in St. Petersburg. On November 9 and 10 strikes began at the Laferme tobacco factory, caused by the reduction of the wages and the arbitrary rejection of defective products. Outraged by enormous fines, low wages and the rough treatment by the management, the women workers downed tools. Lenin and Silvín, the leader of the Zarechye District group, went to the factory to get first-hand information and then wrote a leaflet, "What Should Women Workers at the Laferme Factory Demand", in which the demands put forward by the women cigarette-makers were formulated. To suppress the strike, gendarmes, policemen and fire brigades were summoned, and arrests of the initiators of the strike began. Still, the Ministry of Finance was compelled to issue an order prohibiting the factory owners to reject products arbitrarily and obliging them to use the sums received from the fines for the workers' needs.

On November 13th-15th, following the example of the Laferme factory, workers at a factory of the Association of Mechanical Footwear Production went on strike, as a protest against exorbitant deductions from wages. The League addressed a leaflet to the strikers, calling them to political struggle. The three-day strike ended in success: the workers' demands were satisfied.

The agitation carried on by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle brought tangible results. It was thought highly of not only by the Social-Democrats in Russia, but in the West, too. At the Socialist Congress, which took place in London in 1896, Plekhanov said: "The winter of 1895-1896 in St. Petersburg abounded, as never before, in workers' strikes and unrest, and was seething with the type of life that is characteristic of awakened consciousness among the working-class masses."*

* *The First Congress of the RSDLP. March 1898. Documents and Materials*, Moscow, 1958, p. 114 (in Russian).— Ed.

The main content of the agitation consisted in exposing the factory orders, which was "a starting-point for the awakening of class-consciousness, for the beginning of a trade-union struggle, and for the spread of socialism".* The leaflets and pamphlets, exposing all kind of injustice, served to unite the proletariat. They "created a tremendous sensation, not only in the particular factory exposed in the given leaflet, but in all the factories to which news of the revealed facts spread."** Even the most backward workers developed a regular passion for seeing their pronouncements printed — it became a kind of warfare waged against the exploiters. The appearance of a leaflet, Lenin wrote, was "in truth a declaration of war, because the exposures served greatly to agitate the workers; they evoked among them common demands for the removal of the most glaring outrages and roused in them a readiness to support the demands with strikes... On more than one occasion, the mere appearance of a leaflet proved sufficient to secure the satisfaction of all or part of the demands put forward."*** As a rule, however, it was by going on strike that the workers achieved a victory. Out of 15 strikes, staged by the workers in 1895, nine ended in victory and one in a compromise.

The mass agitation launched by the League of Struggle in its leaflets proved to be an excellent means of inculcating class consciousness in the workers. Yet the level of the class struggle achieved and the further development of the proletarian movement called for organising political agitation on a nationwide scale and the systematic explanation to the workers of the immediate tasks and ultimate goals. That task could be fulfilled only by a Social-Democratic newspaper, of which Lenin conceived even before his trip abroad. He thought that it should not be of a local nature, and by no means an "'Economic' newspaper, but one that aimed to unite the

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 399.— *Ed.*

** Ibid., p. 298.— *Ed.*

*** V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 398-99.— *Ed.*

strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy".*

On Lenin's initiative, the League of Struggle decided to start a newspaper under the name of *Rabocheye Dyelo* (Workers' Cause). Early in December 1895 the first issue was prepared for print, its ideological tenor determined by Lenin's articles. In his editorial "To the Russian Workers" Lenin delineated the historic tasks which faced the Russian working class, stressing that the main one was that of winning political freedom. The editorial urged that it was high time to establish an independent workers' party, capable of becoming the proletariat's political leader. Krzhizhanovsky later said that this issue determined the political line of the Social-Democratic work conducted in Russia for a whole decade to come.

Lenin's article "Frederick Engels", emphasising the great contribution Engels had made to the world working-class movement, was intended for that issue, too. In his article "What Are Our Ministers Thinking About?" Lenin exposed the tsarist government's reactionary policies in the sphere of public education and showed that tsarism was mortally terrified at the thought of the working people acquiring knowledge. Several letters from the provinces about the strike movement were also edited by Lenin. Vaneyev and Silvin wrote an article on the strike at the Laferme factory, and Krzhizhanovsky, on the strike at the Thornton factory; the issue also carried letters about the strike movement in other Russian towns.

On December 6, 1895, a meeting of the League of Struggle leading group, chaired by Lenin, took place, at which materials to be included in the first issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo* were discussed. The final text, two copies of which had been written by hand, was read and approved on December 8th at Krupskaya's flat.

It did, however, prove impossible to get the newspaper printed. The police, assisted by an agent provocateur, traced the League. In the early hours of December 9, Lenin, Krzhizhanovsky, Starkov and Vaneyev, four out of the five members

* Ibid., p. 377.— Ed.

of its leading group, were arrested. The district groups also sustained heavy losses. Altogether, 68 people were arrested. The police also seized the manuscripts of the articles intended for the first issue of *Rabocheye Dyelo* at Vaneyev's flat.

A severe blow was dealt at the League of Struggle. Yet Lenin's organisation, closely connected with the workers' study circles in St. Petersburg, was not extinguished, but continued its activities. A few days after the arrests, a meeting took place of those members of the central and district groups who remained free. They assessed the strength of the organisation and elected a new leading centre, comprising S. I. Radchenko, M. A. Silvin, Yu. O. Martov, and Ya. M. Lyakhovsky.

It was decided at the meeting to call the organisation established by Lenin the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, and to tackle the following tasks: first, to demonstrate that the organisation, far from being destroyed, had even gained in strength; second, to go on with agitation, mostly by issuing leaflets. The appeal "To All St. Petersburg Workers", which had been written before the arrests, was read and approved; it called for unification and organised struggle. The participants in the meeting confirmed the text of the leaflet on behalf of the St. Petersburg League, urging the workers to continue the struggle. It said that in the early hours of December 9 the gendarmes raided the city and that dozens of suspects were thrown behind the bars, while the factories were swarming with police spies. "'So order has been restored, and there will be no more strikes, no leaflets,'— this is what the capitalists think, while their police accomplices are watering at the mouth, contemplating the decorations due to them for their savage services," ran the leaflet. But the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class "stays intact and will go on working for its cause. The police are mistaken. Nothing at all can stop the strikes and the struggle, until the working class frees itself of oppression by the capitalists." The leaflets were mimeographed and circulated at the works and factories.

The arrests made in December worried the workers. In government circles rumours slandering the Marxists were released.

To curb the campaign aimed at discrediting Social-Democracy in the eyes of the public at large, the League issued a leaflet written by Babushkin in late December 1895. It was entitled "What Is a Socialist and a Political Criminal?" and explained in popular form that the socialists, who were described as "enemies of the workers" and "political criminals" in official government papers and whom the government was out to destroy, were in actual fact "those who are striving to emancipate the oppressed working people from the yoke of the capitalist employers". "The proletariat's enemies call the Socialists 'political criminals', the leaflet went on, "because they oppose our barbaric government's efforts to defend the interests of the factory and works owners and to keep the deprived worker under its heel so that they could quietly strip him of his miserable pennies to enable officials to indulge in all sorts of luxuries and satisfy their carnal whims." The leaflet called on the workers to close their ranks and come out shoulder to shoulder, so that "no obstacle will be left standing in their way". This passionate political leaflet was widely circulated among the St. Petersburg workers.

The appearance of leaflets signed by the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class not only bewildered the industrialists, but the government circles as well. The assistant public prosecutor Kichin reported to his chief that "criminal proclamations" had appeared after the arrests. He complained that they called on the workers to come out boldly with their demands and act in unison. The assistant public prosecutor asked for more warrants for arrests.

In the early hours of 5 January, 1896, 19 more people were arrested, among them members of the League new leading centre, Martov and Lyakhovsky, and Ya. P. Ponomaryov, who supervised the technical matters. The district groups also suffered greatly: many active participants in the Social-Democratic movement were thrown into prison, among them Babushkin.

In December 1895 and January 1896, 88 persons were put on trial in connection with the League of Struggle case. Among them were representatives of different social strata, yet most

of them were workers: they comprised 60 per cent of the arrested (53), while students accounted for 17, engineers for 6.8, teachers for 5.7, and doctors, for 3.4 per cent. These figures reflect the composition of the organisation created by Lenin and testify to the fact that the League of Struggle was a working-class organisation which brought together the best part of the St. Petersburg proletariat.

Over half of the 53 arrested workers were metalworkers — fitters, lathe operators, planers and foundry men, and a large part were textile workers — weavers and spinners. They were, as a rule, literate people, who had been trained at vocational training schools, during Sunday and evening courses, and at parish and other primary schools. All of them continued studying on their own and read extensively, and some of them even had their own libraries. They were regular workers, the vanguard of the proletariat. Over 73 per cent of those arrested were young people of 18 to 25 years of age. They were steeled in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and police terror, having started work at an early age.

Even police reports recognised that the working-class organisation established by Lenin was so vital that the arrests effected in December and January only succeeded in suspending the activities for a while, and that "in mid-April 1896, the appeals of the League of Struggle with regard to the workers socialist May Day holiday, were again widely circulated among the workers".

Early in January 1896, the leading centre of the League co-opted new members. Now, in addition to S. I. Radchenko and M. A. Silvin, who had escaped arrest, it included N. K. Krupskaya, S. A. Gofman, and F. I. Gurvich (Dan). Lenin, who was in prison at that time, was kept informed about the League's work and continued to supervise its activities in practice. The liaison was maintained through his sister A. I. Ulyanova-Yelizarova and N. K. Krupskaya. Each time before she went to see her brother in prison, his sister visited the League members, received information on the organisation's work, and then passed it on to Lenin. Krupskaya also told him in detail about the state of affairs in the League, so

that Vladimir Ilyich was fully informed of its activities and was able to give advice on its further work, either orally or by coded messages.

The long months of imprisonment were filled with strenuous creative work. Lenin continued to collect material for his fundamental work *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, compiled leaflets, and wrote a popular pamphlet addressed to the workers "On Strikes", which he sent to an underground printing-shop. However, the printing-shop was discovered by the police, and the manuscript fell into their hands. While in prison, Lenin was very anxious to set up a party. At the end of 1895, he wrote "The Draft Programme", and in the summer of 1896, "Explanation of the Programme of the Social-Democratic Party".

In the first part of "The Draft Programme" Lenin formulated the immediate and ultimate goals of the Marxist Party — the overthrow of the autocracy gaining political freedom, then the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and winning of political power by the working class, as well as the construction of socialist society. In the second part he explained "what should be the activity of the Party and of all class-conscious workers, and what should be their attitude to the interests and strivings of the other classes in Russian society".* In the third, final part he formulated the Party's practical demands, the demands for the working class and the peasantry.

It was no easy matter to write such a large work in code. With his characteristic resourcefulness, Lenin began writing it in milk between the lines of legal books. "He made minute ink-pots out of bread, so that he could swallow them if he heard somebody at the door or noticed someone looking through the peep-hole. Later he recalled laughingly that one day he had such bad luck that he had to swallow six ink-pots."**

Keeping constantly in contact with Lenin and following his advice, the League of Struggle continued working actively.

* V. I. Lenin, "Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 98-99.— Ed.

** *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 1, pp. 54-55.— Ed.

There were new worker members in the districts, and its ranks were also swelled by students and intellectuals, many of whom were past masters at some sort of underground activity. Academician I. M. Gubkin, for example, who had been a member of the League, recalled many years later: "I became so experienced in this kind of work that I have even acquired a sort of trade — adjuster of mimeographs. I was often awakened in the middle of the night and dragged off to some obscure hole in the St. Petersburg Side to put in order and run the apparatus."

Closely linked with the capital's works and factories, the League immediately reacted to all conflicts. When the pay rates were reduced and miscalculations of the workers' output increased at the König factory, the League issued a leaflet calling on the spinners to go on strike if their demands were not met. A few days later, when new rules for paying wages were introduced for the shipbuilders which infringed on their interests, it issued another leaflet, "To the Workers at the New Admiralty". The management had to cancel the new rules and annul the fines meted out to 891 shipbuilders. The League issued leaflets "To the Armourers of the Sestroretsk Works from the Workers' League in St. Petersburg", "Comrade Workers of Alexandrovsky Cast-iron Mill" and "To the Workers of the Voronin Mill", in which it called on the workers to go on strike if their demands were not satisfied.

In the first four months of 1896 the League issued 17 leaflets; the number of copies grew with each month — now they were distributed in hundreds and thousands. The effect of them on the workers increased, and the strike movement expanded.

The class consciousness of the workers and their awareness of the solidarity of their interests with those of the international proletariat were growing. On the 25th anniversary of the Paris Commune the League sent an address to French workers on behalf of the St. Petersburg proletariat. It said that, while bourgeois France was embracing the tsarist government, "the freedom-loving thought of the Russian proletariat was throbbing in pain locked in the tsarist prison", but was also rising to the struggle. The League called for the strengthening of international ties: "Let us lay the foundations for more vigorous

relations between the proletarians of both our countries on the anniversary of the day when the first breach was made by the French proletarians in the stronghold of the bourgeois world. Let them remember the behest of their great teacher: 'Workingmen of All Countries, Unite!'" As a token of international solidarity, the St. Petersburg workers also sent to the Paris workers one hundred roubles to buy a wreath and lay it on the Communards' grave.

For May Day of 1896, the League issued a leaflet printed in a record number of copies — over 2,000, which was distributed at 40 St. Petersburg works and factories. It summed up the results of the League's activities for the first period as follows: "Over the year past Russian workers showed to their employers that the submissiveness of the slaves is being replaced in them by the steadfast staunchness of people who do not bow to the impudence of capitalists coveting unpaid labour." The workers, it was said in the leaflet, went on strike almost in all the industrial centres of Russia, and most of the strikes ended in victory. The leaflet called on the workers to join the League and promote the great cause of the workers' unification. In conclusion, confidence was expressed that the working class will ultimately win out: "Our muscular arm will be raised, and the shameful chains will fall away; the working people of Rus will arise, and the hearts of the capitalists and the government, which is always at the former's beck and call, will contract in fright."

The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, created by Lenin on the principles of Marxism, was an embryo of a proletarian party of a new type, the first Russian organisation to try to combine scientific socialism with the mass workers' movement. The League's consistent activities immediately told on the workers' movement: by the mid-1890s the St. Petersburg proletariat's action had grown considerably.

In the summer of 1896, the strike movement of the St. Petersburg proletariat became a regular "industrial war". The refusal of factory owners to pay for forced absence from work on the occasion of the coronation of Nicholas II served as

an immediate cause for a general strike of the textile workers. On 14 May, workers at the Rossiiskaya Mill downed tools and went to other factories to call on their comrades to follow suit. The strike expanded. On May 30th, it spread to the largest textile factories — the Novaya and the Nevskaya Cotton Spinning mills; the number of strikers had almost doubled.

On May 30th, the senior factory inspector said at the conference at the St. Petersburg Governor: "The calm way in which the strike is proceeding makes one convinced that there is a strong organisation behind these disturbances." It was decided to bring the strikers to trial.

By that time, about a dozen factories had gone on strike. The workers' actions had to be co-ordinated. At a meeting held late in May, at which about a hundred representatives of the factories involved in the strike were present, the workers' general demands were worked out under the guidance of the League of Struggle and a leaflet reflecting them issued under the heading: "What Are the Workers of the St. Petersburg Cotton Spinning Mills Demanding?" Their demands were as follows: 1) the working day should last from 7 a. m. to 7 p. m.; 2) a dinner-break should last one and a half hours, so that the working hours should be ten and a half instead of 13; 3) the pay rates should be raised everywhere by one kopeck, and by two kopecks wherever possible; 4) on Saturdays work should stop simultaneously everywhere, at 2 p. m.; 5) the factory owners should not stop or set off again machine-tools at their whim before the set time; 6) the wages for the first fortnight of each month should be remunerated accurately and paid on time, not delayed indefinitely; 7) the wages for the time wasted during the coronation days should be paid in full.

The leaflet united the strikers into the general front of struggle against the employers and imparted an organised character to the movement. On June 1st, the League issued yet another leaflet, "To the Workers at All St. Petersburg Mills", urging them to fight in an organised manner to get their demands, formulated in the leaflet of May 30th, satisfied.

By June 3rd the strike had spread to almost all the textile mills in the city; from 30 to 40 thousand workers were in-

volved. That was a great success for the League, which in fact prepared and supervised the general strike of the St. Petersburg textile workers.

The League members were in the midst of events and led the struggle of the strikers, despite the aggravation of police reprisals. The leaflets written by them were, as formerly, approved by the leading centre. "Each illegal book or pamphlet, which passed through our store fund," Silvín wrote, "bore our mark, showing, on the one hand, that its content had been approved by the League for distributing among workers; and, on the other, it also added to the organisation's prestige."

As the class struggle became more acute, the demand for illegal literature increased. The technical appliances used to multiply the copies were working full-time. There were days, on which three different leaflets had to be printed and distributed. The mimeograph and the hectograph worked without stop. Leaflets were both of a general nature, expressing the workers' demands as a whole, and also those containing demands of groups of workers at a particular factory.

In the latter half of May the League stepped up agitation, and meetings of the workers, representing various factories, became more frequent. At the meetings, they were given the League's appeals, to be distributed among their fellow-workers. Such meetings went on practically all the time. The most heated meeting was held in the first few days of June at the Putilovsky Val. They were attended not only by representatives of the workers who were on strike but by other workers as well; F. Lengnik, the League's representative, took the floor: he told the workers about the impression produced by the St. Petersburg strike abroad, about the sympathy of German workers and collection of funds for the strikers, and gave out some thousand copies of the leaflet "What Are the Workers of the St. Petersburg Cotton Spinning Mills Demanding?"

On 3 June 1896, the League issued the leaflet "To All St. Petersburg Workers", calling on them to support the textile workers on strike. "All the workers are brothers, indeed, made very close by their hard lot. We all share common interests, and common strivings and goals." The leaflet called

on the workers to be guided in their struggle against the exploiting classes, not by narrow professional, but by class interests. "When we shall really become one single whole, no force in the world will be able to overpower the workers' movement."

The government and factory owners intensified their offensive against the striking workers. The workers' living quarters were flooded with gendarme detachments, Cossacks and army units. Arrests were made and the prisons became overcrowded. A secret circular advised the judges not to abide by the law when trying the strikers, but apply the rules adopted at the factory concerned. The government did everything it could to suppress the working-class movement.

In those turbulent days the League issued one leaflet after another, actively and promptly influencing the course of the strike. To attract the attention of the progressively-minded public to the working-class question and to the general strike of the textile workers, a leaflet "To Russian Public" was issued, calling on all the Russian people to support the "conscious movement of the St. Petersburg workers, unprecedented in its scope and nature". It was emphasised in the leaflet that the conscious proletariat was the main revolutionary force, destined "to do away with our common enemy — the autocracy". It was widely circulated in the city, and was sent by post to certain individuals and institutions, and to newspaper offices.

Meanwhile, the government and the industrialists were preparing to deal a decisive blow at the strikers. The police began mass searches and arrests.

To effect a split among the strikers, the management of several factories paid 50 per cent of the wages to those workers who refused to take part in the strike, although they could not work either. The management promised to modify the pay rates, pay the wages regularly, compensate for overtime work and remove from the factories foremen who took bribes.

On 15 June, 1896, S. Yu. Witte, Minister of Finance, addressed the workers of the cotton spinning mills and weaving factories. He demagogically assured them that "the government holds dear both the welfare of the factory-owners and the

workers" and promised protection by the tsarist government to those who "will do their duty by the law and live as God willed".

Brutal reprisals and the policy of flirting with the workers attained their aim: the textile workers, who were in dire need by now, had to call off the strike.

The League answered to Witte's assurances by a leaflet, "To the St. Petersburg Workers", in which the minister's lies and hypocrisy were exposed and the class essence of the tsarist government's policy was revealed, thus showing how false the minister's attempt to disguise the autocracy as a supra-class form of government was.

The League activists, who remained at large, considered this leaflet insufficiently pointed in political respect. They asked Lenin in prison to compose a reply to the minister, and Lenin wrote a leaflet headed: "To the Tsarist Government". But as the liaison failed at that time, and soon fresh arrests ensued, Lenin's leaflet was not printed until November.

Lenin exposed the falseness of the government's assertion that the strikes were caused by the "specific nature of cotton-spinning and weaving production". The cause of the strikes, Lenin pointed out, lay in the specific nature of all of Russian production and the administrative order, in the lack of rights for Russia's citizens and the unbridled arbitrariness of the government, which fawned upon the capitalists. The minister's blabber to the effect that the strike was entirely the fault of the "instigators" was reminiscent of the reasoning of a police official bribed by the capitalists: "Agitators came ... and a strike broke out. Now, when all the ministers saw a strike of 30,000 workers, they began to think, and finally came to the conclusion that strikes do not break out because socialist agitators come on the scene, but that socialist agitators come on the scene because strikes break out, because the workers' struggle breaks out against the capitalists.... That is a good lesson for Finance Minister Witte."*

Lenin ridiculed the Minister of Finance and exposed the

* V. I. Lenin, "To the Tsarist Government", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 124-25.— *Ed.*

hypocrisy of the government's declaration that the strikes assumed a political character only due to the Social-Democrats. "...Before any socialists did, the government itself took all possible measures to give the strikes a political character," he wrote.* Arrests and banishments from the capital, activities by police spies and agents provocateurs, fawning upon the factory owners and the defence of their interests by the government, all amounted to the fact that "the government itself was ahead of everybody else in explaining to the workers that the war they were waging against the factory owners must inevitably be a war against the government".**

The government and the capitalists launched an offensive against the proletariat unanimously. "Peaceful workers who stood up for their rights and defended themselves against the factory owners' tyranny had the entire strength of the state power, with police and troops, gendarmes and public prosecutors, hurled against them."*** The entire strength of the state treasury came down on the workers, who had only a few coppers, their own and their comrades', to support them.

The leaflet ended in a political assessment of the strike movement. "The strikes of 1895-96 have not been in vain. They have been of tremendous service to the Russian workers, they have shown them how to wage the struggle for their interests. They have taught them to understand *the political situation and the political needs of the working class*."****

The workers who assumed their work after the acute class struggles were different people. The collision with the government served to open the eyes of many of them to political matters. They understood that the capitalists were backed by another enemy, the tsarist government, without the overthrowing of which it was impossible to secure the satisfaction of their vital demands.

* V. I. Lenin, "To the Tsarist Government", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 125.— *Ed.*

** Ibid.— *Ed.*

*** V. I. Lenin, "To the Tsarist Government", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 126.— *Ed.*

**** Ibid, p. 127.— *Ed.*

Fully aware of the significance of the strike struggle of the St. Petersburg proletariat for the whole Russia, the League sent its leaflets to Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Kiev, Tver, and other cities. In all the fairly large industrial centres the summer strike of the St. Petersburg spinners and weavers was discussed. It was defended or upbraided but everybody tried to assess it. This famous "industrial war" enriched the Russian proletariat with revolutionary experience and raised high the banner of the Russian Social-Democracy.

The strike of the St. Petersburg textile workers produced a tremendous response, too. The workers in Britain, France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland followed the events in St. Petersburg closely and raised funds to help the strikers.

The movement of fraternal solidarity assumed special scope in Britain, where tremendous effort was put in it by Eleanor Aveling, the daughter of Karl Marx, and Vera Zasulich, a famous Russian revolutionary. On June 26, 1896, a Uniting Committee on the Strike was set up in London and in August it sent a letter to the League, accompanied with a sum of money for the strikers. The Committee," the letter ran, "which has been organised here to collect money to assist the great St. Petersburg strike, is sending you its fraternal greetings and expressing its heartfelt pleasure at the results achieved through your efforts." In its answer to the British workers, the League declared that "the Russian workers will never forget the friendly hand offered to them in the heat of battle, at a decisive moment in its entering the scene of world history".

The Western Social-Democratic press widely commented on the course of the strike. The central organ of the German Social-Democratic Party noted that it was the first mass strike in Russia. On June 27th, 1896 *Vorwärts* wrote that "the St. Petersburg events testify to the fact that socialism has successfully penetrated into the masses... The main contribution has been made by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which is working indefatigably to disseminate the fundamentals of socialism in Russia".

The Vienna *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote on June 26, that "the mass strike in St. Petersburg was an event of historic signifi-

cance, for it opened up a new stage in the development of Russia. The Russian industrial proletariat has for the first time ever come out on the scene with its own special demands and goals, and for the first time ever the broad sections of the workers are leading a purposeful, conscious struggle... Thus the socialist movement in Russia is going beyond the dominion of political theory and onto the soil of the practical class struggle". The Russian working-class movement was becoming an important component of the international proletariat's struggle.

Lenin pointed to the great importance of the 1895-1896 strikes in St. Petersburg; he wrote that the agitation of 1894-95 and "the strikes of 1895-96 had already given rise to a mass working-class movement, which both in ideas and organisation was linked with the Social-Democratic movement."* It was precisely due to the Social-Democratic leadership of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle that the strike had assumed such great scope and political significance. "Does not this organisation represent the embryo of a revolutionary party based on the working-class movement, which leads the class struggle of the proletariat against capital and against the autocratic government without hatching any conspiracies, while deriving its strength from the combination of socialist and democratic struggle into the single, indivisible class struggle of the St. Petersburg proletariat? Brief as they may have been, have not the activities of the League already shown that the proletariat, led by Social-Democracy, is a big political force with which the government is already compelled to reckon, and to which it hastens to make concessions?"**

Even the government circles understood that the "peace" established at factories was of a temporary nature. The government commission sent to investigate the causes of the strikes arrived at the conclusion that if everything was left as it had been at the factories, then, because of the laborious

* V. I. Lenin, "Disruption of Unity Under Cover of Outcries for Unity", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 343.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 341.— *Ed.*

conditions, the workers would continue to present a fertile soil for the "sowing of harmful doctrines". The strikes would occur again and again, and each time it would be more difficult "to resolve them, since the accumulated experience would inevitably rally the workers into an ever more organised mass".

After the strike, the League went on with agitation among the masses. From July 15 to August 6, ten leaflets were issued, in which particular attention was paid to analysing the experience of the struggle in the form of strikes. The same issue was discussed at the workers' meetings, one of which took place on July 14 in a wood near Pargolovo (a suburb of St. Petersburg.— *Tr.*), attended by about 30 representatives from workers' study circles. The League's leading centre was represented by M. A. Silvin and F. V. Lengnik. The meeting was opened by a speech by V. G. Vattsel, a worker from the Baltiisky Works, who managed, in the words of Lengnik, to raise "the textile workers' strike to a level of great principle".

The meeting recommended that more leaflets be printed, both written specially for workers at individual industrial enterprises and of a general political nature, addressed to the whole of the city's proletariat. The question of establishing a popular workers' newspaper was also discussed.

F. V. Lengnik informed those at the meeting about the international workers' movement and the response of the European proletariat to the general strike of St. Petersburg spinners and weavers. He emphasised that the workers' movement in Russia was a component part of the international proletarian movement. Then he told the workers about the international Socialist Congress, which was to be convened and the need to send representatives from the Russian proletariat there. It was decided to delegate G. V. Plekhanov, the leader of the Emancipation of Labour Group, as representative of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle.

Under the influence of the League's activities and the mass workers' movement, the Young shifted to the left. It was decided to admit a small group led by K. M. Takhtarev into the League. Already, when taking part in the meeting at Pargolovo, Takhtarev and his followers, M. Ya. Sitnikov and V. N. Katin-

Yartsev, and arrived at the conclusion that there were no "substantial differences between them (the group led by Takhtarev and the League.— *The Authors.*), which would constitute an obstacle to joint actions under a common banner", and so they "decided to unite", and by the beginning of August they were considered "as members of the League". The Takhtarev's group was admitted on condition that they recognised the League's organisational principles, programme and tactics.

The League started preparations for powerful new action by the capital's proletariat, but a fresh round of arrests prevented it. Almost all the members of the leading centre found themselves behind bars, either in a detention prison or in the Peter and Paul Fortress. From February to October 1896, 128 people were put on trial in connection with the activities of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, among them 101 workers, eight students, eight teachers, three engineers, four office employees, two doctors and two representatives of other professions. These data testify to the fact that in the mid-1890s, the workers became the main force in the liberation movement in Russia, assuming the part of leader in the revolutionary process. The revolutionary-minded workers had quite a high educational level: among those put on trial, there were eight people with a higher and five with a secondary education, and the rest had had primary schooling or learned their ABC on their own.

Due to the frequent arrests of the League members and the constant inflow of new strength, it is impossible to assess its membership precisely. The police documents and all kind of reminiscences, however, allow an approximate estimation of its activists. It has already been mentioned that in December 1895 and January 1896, 88 people were put on trial. But many people escaped arrest at that time, so that this figure is far from covering the whole membership, which was much greater; there were about 150 members in the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class at the moment it was being formalised.

The organisation's social composition at that period can be judged by the affiliations of those put on trial from December

1895 to September 1896: out of 216 people, 154, or 71 per cent, were workers. These data convincingly refute the lie invented by bourgeois falsifiers, who assert, on the basis of the dust-covered archives of Russian liberals, that the League was made up of intellectuals. In actual fact, the latter accounted for less than a third. The bulk of the League consisted of the most advanced and active workers. Among them there were I. V. Babushkin, V. A. Shelgunov, F. I. Bodrov, N. Ye. Merkulov, V. G. Vattsel, P. Ya. Ivanov, B. I. Zinovyev, N. G. Poletayev, I. I. Yakovlev, K. M. Norinsky. They extended the scope of agitation at the city's industrial enterprises, convened workers' meetings and spoke at them as chief reporters, initiated and led the strikes, and imparted to them an organised character. They offered their own flats for meetings and the studies of the workers' circles, and sometimes set up such circles themselves and conducted studies there. The foremost workers, holding Social-Democratic views, collected information on the condition of the St. Petersburg proletariat, wrote leaflets and articles, printed and distributed them. "Without such men the Russian people would remain for ever a people of slaves and serfs. With such men the Russian people will win complete emancipation from all exploitation."* History has convincingly proved these Lenin's words.

The tsarist authorities cruelly persecuted the vanguard workers and representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia. One wave of the arrests followed another; not only the League members, but the rank-and-file participants in strikes were thrown into prison. After the summer 1896 strike, 1,600 people were brought to trial, and 700 were expelled from St. Petersburg. By mid-October, almost the whole of the League's leading centre had been imprisoned, and the leadership was taken over by new people.

A new leading centre was formed at a meeting of the League members who remained free, with S. I. Radchenko,

* V. I. Lenin, "Ivan Vasilyevich Babushkin", *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, p. 364.—Ed.

A. A. Yakubova, K. M. Takhtarev, A. N. Potresov and L. N. Radchenko included.

The appearance in the leading centre and in the district groups of the Young, insufficiently experienced politically and not steeled enough in the class struggles, inevitably had its effect on the League's activities.

The Young sought support not among the vanguard workers, but among the backward ones. They saw servicing the spontaneous workers' movement, rather than leading it, as the chief task of a Social-Democratic organisation. The emergent opportunist trend bowed to spontaneity and underestimated the importance of making the working class conscious of socialist aims. Even the old leaders of the League began to vacillate, so that the opportunist trend in the League's leadership gained in strength. A certain recess set in in the organisation's activities: for the first seven months of 1896, 41 leaflets were issued, and in the remaining five months of the same year, only 13; in some of them, moreover, notes of Economism were evident.

Takhtarev and his associates tried to justify their opportunist policies by the lull that set in in capital after the summer strike. They said that the old organisational forms of the League were no longer consonant with the situation. If the organisation sticks to its old positions, they said, it "will lose its importance and authority among the workers". Now "we have to take into account the fact that there are workers who consider themselves experienced enough to take more independent action and choose their direction themselves. These workers ... do not wish to be bossed about by intellectuals any longer". Having opposed the Social-Democratic workers to the Marxist intelligentsia and invented a fable about the struggle allegedly going on between them for leading positions in the organisation, the Young decided to reorganise the League. If it is not reorganised, Takhtarev threatened, the proletariat will set up its own independent organisation to exist parallel to the League. Referring to the need for strengthening the League's ties with the workers, Takhtarev and his associates insisted on reorganising the leading centre and establishing

a workers' fund that would be independent of the League.

A controversy ensued in the leading centre of the League between Leninist and the opportunist trends. The Leninists led by S. I. Radchenko determinedly rebuffed all the attempts by the opportunists to curtail Social-Democratic work and direct the working-class movement along the road of trade-unionism. Thus, "the two future conflicting trends in Russian Social-Democracy arose and grew", as Lenin wrote.*

The League's leading centre, weakened as it was by this controversy, could no longer respond immediately to the workers' unrest and influence the strike movement in the same effective way as before.

Meanwhile, the fear of organised action on the part of the St. Petersburg proletariat made the autocracy pass the law of June 2, 1897, which reduced working hours to 11 and a half, a fact that in itself, as Lenin wrote, "shows the *success* of the working-class movement in Russia; it shows what tremendous power lies in the class-conscious and staunch demand of the working masses. No amount of persecution, no wholesale arrests and deportations, no grandiose political trials, hounding of the workers have been of any avail... This autocratic government, considered to be all-powerful and independent of the people, had to yield to the demands of several tens of thousands of St. Petersburg workers..

"On the other hand, the significance of the new law lies in the fact that it necessarily and inevitably *gives a fresh impetus* to the Russian working-class movement."**

Another wave of arrests made the League still weaker. The opportunists — Takhtarev, Katin-Yartsev, Akimov, Goldman (Gorev) et al.— snatched at this opportunity and set up a Central Agitation Group, or the Workers' Committee, made up of workers alone; this action was aimed at splitting the organisation into two sections: a workers' and an intellectuals'.

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 378.—*Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The New Factory Law", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 302-03.—*Ed.*

The opportunists demanded that the League should not take any independent action without first obtaining consent from the Central Agitation Group. In their opinion, the chief goal of the League consisted in catering to the needs of the workers' movement. They also planned to establish independent workers' funds, which would not depend on the League. Thus, the League was essentially being replaced by a broad non-Party organisation.

The struggle going on between the revolutionary and the opportunist trends became more acute with every passing month. The Old criticised the opportunist tendencies of the Young but, due to their own inadequate theoretical grounding, failed to expose convincingly these supporters of the reverse movement; that task was accomplished by Lenin.

On February 13, 1897, Lenin was sentenced to three years of exile in Eastern Siberia, under police surveillance. On the following day he was set free from prison: the authorities allowed Lenin, Krzhizhanovsky, Vaneyev and several other people tried and convicted in connection with the League of Struggle activities to stay in St. Petersburg for three days to see to their personal affairs. All of them used that time to meet the leaders of the League. Several meetings took place between February 14 and 17, at which a bitter dispute arose over tactical and organisational issues.

In the ensuing polemics with the old leadership of the organisation, the Young demanded that the Social-Democrats concentrate their efforts on establishing workers' funds, which they considered the main form of the proletariat's rallying together. They substituted a non-Party organisation, whose main aim was the struggle to improve the workers' material position, for the militant Party organisation, called upon to lead the working-class political and economic struggle. In fact they rejected the working-class struggle for political freedoms, and ultimately, for socialism.

The Old led by Lenin sharply criticised the opportunist position of the Young. They proved that the chief task was that of consolidating the League, of creating an organisation of revolutionaries that could have led the workers' study circles,

workers' funds, and all other proletarian organisations. Lenin and his associates (Vaneyev, Krzhizhanovsky, Starkov, Radchenko and others) rejected the opportunist proposals of the Young, seeing the League as an embryo of the revolutionary party of the proletariat.

In outlining the contours of a working-class party and explaining how it can be created, Lenin proceeded from the experience accumulated by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which had directed the class struggle of the proletariat against the capitalists and the autocracy, basing its activities on the workers' movement and drawing its strength from the fight for socialism and democracy, combined in the indivisible class struggle. Lenin warned the Social-Democrats against biding their time and called on them to concentrate their efforts to carry out the main task faced by the revolutionary Marxists — formation of a united proletarian party by rallying together the Social-Democratic study circles and groups scattered all over Russia. Recollecting how he started his revolutionary activities in the group of the Old, Lenin wrote: "I used to work in a study circle that set itself very broad, all-embracing tasks; and all of us, members of that circle, suffered painfully and acutely from the realisation that we were acting as amateurs at a moment in history when we might have been able to say, varying a well-known statement: 'Give us an organisation of revolutionaries, and we will overturn Russia!'"*

Lenin's idea that it was necessary to unite Social-Democratic study circles and groups into a single proletarian party on an organisational principle and on the basis of ideological unity, was approved and supported not only by the revolutionary Marxists of St. Petersburg, but of the whole Russia, too.

The League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class led by Lenin was a genuine embryo of Bolshevism, as well as a splendid political school for advanced workers and the best representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia,

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 466-67.— *Ed.*

which gave Russia dozens of professional revolutionary fighters and active builders of the new-type Marxist Party; among them were Babushkin, Shelgunov, Poletayev, Kalinin, Bodrov, Krupskaya, Krzhizhanovsky, Radchenko, Silvin, and many others. In this way Lenin helped to create the core of professional revolutionaries, who made it possible to establish the Bolshevik Party of the Russian proletariat.

Chapter Three

**THE MOSCOW
AND IVANOVO-VOZNESENSK
WORKERS' LEAGUES**

The Central industrial area played an important role in Russia's economy in the 1890s. Most of the textile industry was concentrated there and the machine-building and other processing industries developed rapidly. By the late 1890s about 600,000 workers were employed at the region's factories and mills.

Moscow and Moscow Gubernia were foremost in this vast area. The city and its environs boasted the country's major textile mills — the Prokhorov and Danilov mills and the Zindel mill in Moscow, the Morozov mill in Orekhovo-Zuyev and others, and quite a few metal-working enterprises — Bromley's, Gujon's, and Weichelt's works. There were 838 factories and plants in Moscow alone by the turn of the century and the number of workers stood at 95,000. Textile workers formed the majority of the Moscow proletariat and numbered 46,900, while metal-workers were the second largest group of about 20,000. The Moscow and Moscow Gubernia factory workers constituted one of the most representative groups of the Russian working class.

Moscow's proletariat was concentrated for the most part at major enterprises. About 50 per cent of the textile workers and 40 per cent of the metal-workers were employed at enterprises with a total work-force of more than 500. These major enterprises became the key seats of the emergent workers' movement. Acute social antagonisms, ruthless exploitation (at most of Moscow's factories and mills the working day lasted 14-15 hours) and political arbitrariness evoked protest among the workers and made them fight for their rights. Moscow Gubernia was a major centre of strike movement. In the 1870s more than 60 strikes and disturbances took place at its enterprises, which accounted for one-fifth of all the strikes and disturbances in Russia in those years. In 1885 the well-known strike at

the Nikolsky mill in Orekhovo-Zuyevo involved 8,000 workers and demonstrated the workers' growing organisation, cohesion and class solidarity.

Ivanovo-Voznesensk was another major industrial region in Central Russia. By the turn of the century, together with Shuya, Kokhma, Teikovo and Lezhnevo, it had about 50,000 industrial workers. Most of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers had no links with the countryside. According to statistical data, a mere 11 per cent of the workers engaged in agricultural work, while those coming from the workers' families accounted for 37 per cent. "...Most of the workers we had to deal with," a factory inspector at Ivanovo-Voznesensk pointed out, "are already typical factory workers having no links with the land and only a smaller section of them is, as it were, in a transitional state."

Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the "Russian Manchester", was a typical industrial city with crowded and dirty barracks, where thousands of workers took shelter under the vigilant eye of the employers' foreman, and wooden huts in Ivanovo Yamy (a suburb in Ivanovo-Voznesensk), where dozens of workers slept side by side in unbearably stuffy air. The workers reacted to their extremely hard living and working conditions by protesting resolutely and started the struggle against the capitalists and the government. Broad sections of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers took part in strike movement. Suffice it to say that at least twelve strikes involving about 10,000 factory workers took place there in the first half of the 1890s alone.

Ivanovo-Voznesensk (now Ivanovo) saw especially acute class antagonisms between labour and capital, between the workers and the employers. The most brutal forms of exploitation reigned there. Women and youngsters accounted for nearly half of the city's work-force. The working day lasted 13-14 hours, sometimes even 16 hours. Wages were at subsistence level and, according to official data of the factory inspection, workers could only live "by bread, watery cabbage soup and buckwheat porridge".

Emerging as a result of the rapid growth of capitalist industry, the workers' and the Social-Democratic movement

in the Central industrial area developed under the beneficial influence of Lenin's ideas. Many Social-Democrats in Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Shuya, Orekhovo-Zuyevo and other cities were familiar with Lenin's book *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* and pamphlet "Explanation of the Law on Fines Imposed on Factory Workers". Besides, Lenin repeatedly met and talked with leaders of Marxist study circles and groups, and his friendly advice and recommendations promoted the formation of Social-Democratic organisations and fostered them ideologically.

Tsarist authorities resorted to the most cruel measures to suppress the Social-Democratic workers' movement in the Central industrial area of Russia. Nonetheless, neither regular police raids on the study circles, nor frequent arrests of their members could halt the proletariat's mounting struggle against the onerous economic oppression and political lawlessness. From the mid-1890s on, the isolated Social-Democratic study circles of Moscow and Ivanovo-Voznesensk began uniting into city Workers' Leagues which soon adopted the name, The Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

THE EARLY STAGE OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN MOSCOW AND IVANOVVO-VOZNESENSK

Uninfluenced by Narodism or Blanquism, Marxism began to spread among Moscow's revolutionary youth in 1891 and early 1892. Prior to 1891 the Marxist study circles and groups in Moscow were primarily engaged in self-education and it was only since that year that they engaged in propaganda of Marxist ideas among the students.

The students' study circle that formed around G. Mandelshtam and G. Krukovsky was closest to Marxism. They studied Russian economics and Karl Marx's writings. Krukovsky and Mandelshtam translated Marxist publications and expounded the Marxist doctrine at students' study circles. Under the

influence of Mandelshtam, who was a confirmed Marxist familiar with the European workers' movement, the circle began to increasingly adhere to Marxism. At the beginning of 1892 it broke up.

At the same time two other Marxist study circles, one headed by A. Ryazanov and the other by A. Vinokurov, were formed on the basis of Narodnik students' circles. Ryazanov's circle concentrated on studying Marxism, translating Marxist literature and disseminating Marxist theory among students. Vinokurov's circle paid more attention to propaganda among workers. Through S. Mickiewicz the circle established close contacts with I. A. Semyonov, a worker at the Brest railway workshops, and S. I. Prokofyev, an assistant engine-driver at the Brest railway line. The latter had formerly been associated with the Narodniks but his acquaintance with Marxists helped him find the right path as he felt that they were the "true friends of the workers".

The work of the Moscow Marxists was greatly influenced by the meeting Mickiewicz had with Lenin in Nizhny Novgorod, which the latter visited in August 1893 on his way from Samara to St. Petersburg.

In Nizhny Novgorod, Lenin sought to establish contacts with local Marxists, including the statistician P. Skvortsov, whom he knew by his articles in *Yuridichesky Vestnik*. Lenin met Mickiewicz through the Nizhny Novgorod Marxists and had a lively talk with him. They discussed the prospects for the development of capitalism in Russia, opposition to the Narodniks, and the workers' movement in the West. Mickiewicz also described the work of the Moscow Marxists. Mickiewicz later recalled that Lenin especially emphasised the need to establish a stable nationwide organisation for which it was indispensable to have close contacts with the Social-Democrats in different cities and towns.

Lenin produced a strong impression on his interlocutors. Commenting on his vast knowledge and profound judgement, Mickiewicz wrote: "He had already demonstrated the makings of a future organiser of our Party: he paid tremendous attention to pooling all the available revolutionary and Marxist

forces and to establishing links between Marxists scattered about in different cities.”*

From Nizhny Novgorod Lenin proceeded to Moscow where the Ulyanovs had just settled. He was informed there about the local state of affairs by A. Ulyanova-Yelizarova and her husband M. Yelizarov. Ulyanova-Yelizarova was active in the revolutionary work and soon became an active member of the Moscow Social-Democratic organisation. She was responsible for maintaining contacts between the Social-Democrats of Moscow, St. Petersburg and some other cities. She also translated propaganda publications from German and Hauptmann's play *The Weavers*, which was hectographed and became very popular among progressive young people.

When he returned to Moscow in early September, Mickiewicz struck up a friendship with the Ulyanovs. He recalled that the members of the family assisted him in every way during his work in Moscow and helped establish some valuable contacts.

Mickiewicz's acquaintance with Lenin and the Yelizarovs gave a new impulse to the work carried on by the Marxist study circle formed by Vinokurov and Mickiewicz. In September 1893 six members of the circle met at Vinokurov's home, among them S. I. Mickiewicz, A. N. Vinokurov, P. I. Vinokurova, M. N. Lyadov, worker S. I. Prokofyev and Ye. I. Sponti, who had recently arrived in Moscow and had been converted to Marxism as a result of attending a study circle headed by the well-known Polish Social-Democrat I. Tyszko. Sponti shared with members of the group the experience of Social-Democratic propaganda and agitation work in Poland and showed them some agitational pamphlets translated from Polish into Russian. The meeting decided to set up an organisation with the aim of carrying out systematic propaganda and agitation among the Moscow workers. The six members of the circle present at the meeting were to form its core.

In this way the first Moscow Marxist group for propaganda and agitation among the workers was set up in 1893, laying the foundations for a Social-Democratic organisation in Mos-

* *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 2, p. 56.— *Ed.*

cow. From that time on the revolutionary activities of Moscow's Social-Democrats continued steadily, despite constant arrests. After major failures, their struggle seemed to ebb at times, receding to the underground only to flare up again. Fresh forces emerged and work was carried on and on. Beginning with that time the Moscow secret police placed the Social-Democrats under constant surveillance.

Despite police surveillance, the "six" carried on vigorous activities. They strengthened old contacts, established new ones and, through advanced workers, set up study circles at major enterprises where workers themselves, along with the intellectuals, carried out propaganda work.

This is how Mickiewicz described the work performed by the study circles at that period: "...Through workers attending the circle meetings we amassed information about the working conditions at factories, working hours, wages, factory inspection, foremen's abuses and so on. We used these facts, accumulated in this way and also gleaned from writings about the situation of the working class in Russia, to illustrate Marxist theory, trying in this way to bring the theory as close as possible to life and to relate it to the workers' vital and immediate needs. To extend our influence, we held what are now called 'briefings' during which worker members of the circles invited from 15 to 25 friends who had read only one or two pamphlets, or had never read anything at all, to some factory worker's flat; an intellectual and one or two of the more politically conscious workers also attended the meeting and held discussions. These discussions were not strictly regimented and dealt with everything, including the conditions of the workers' life, politics, and religion. They were held in a lively manner and were a great success. From among those present some workers were selected for further systematic circle studies."

The circles formed on the initiative of the "six" first engaged primarily in propaganda, and studied writings on social and economic problems, but the nature of their propaganda work gradually changed and increasingly involved with the workers' life.

To carry out propaganda in the circles, the Moscow Marx-

ists obtained illegal writings and themselves wrote popular pamphlets, for instance, A. N. Vinokurov, "How Capitalists and Workers Came into Being", M. N. Lyadov, "How Peasants and Craftsmen Turned into Factory Workers" and "On Women-Workers". Exiled to Nizhny Novgorod in 1893, Krukovsky wrote and sent to his Moscow associates the four "Talks on Political Economy" outlining Marx's *Capital* in popular form. All these writings copied by hand were passed around and read at circle meetings.

The technique of copying (of pamphlets and leaflets later on) was still very primitive — they were copied by hand, typed or hectographed, but the latter process was agonisingly long and demanded great effort and strict conspiracy. A lot of paper and hectographic ink had to be acquired. For conspiratorial reasons paper had to be bought in small portions and in different shops, while ink had to be obtained from people licenced to use hectographs. Then the text of the pamphlet had to be handcopied in hectographic ink or typed.

The hectographed leaflet or pamphlet was carefully kept and passed from hand to hand. "We were exceedingly happy," Lyadov recalled, "to learn that a shapirograph and a pocket press consisting of several dozens of gutta-percha letters with the help of which it was possible to compose two or three lines of a printed text, had been invented. We managed ... to buy a pocket press. Every line was composed separately and came out crooked but just the same the leaflet was type-set and not written by hand. This immediately raised its prestige among workers."

The dissemination of Marxism in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Vladimir and other cities in the Central industrial area was organised by N. Ye. Fedoseyev, a pioneer of the Russian Social-Democratic movement. After serving a prison sentence, Fedoseyev was deported to Vladimir Gubernia in January 1892. He set up a Marxist circle composed of progressive students in Vladimir. N. A. Sergiyevsky and S. P. Shesternin were notable among the circle members and subsequently became active members of the Bolshevik Party. "Fedoseyev attracted us like a magnet," the former Narodnik Shesternin recalled. "Natural-

ly, he soon revolutionised our world outlook — we abandoned Narodism to embrace Marxism.”

Fedoseyev's circle in Vladimir also exercised influence on the workers of Orekhovo-Zuyevo. In late summer, 1892, Fedoseyev himself visited the town, and the Orekhovo-Zuyevo and Shuya circles discussed his “Programme of Workers' Action”, which explained the historic role of the working class in its struggle for socialism and its immediate tasks.

The first Marxist study circle of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers was set up with O. A. Varentsova's assistance in November 1892. According to the circle's Rules, its major aim was to organise workers to combat the capitalists and to propagandise socialist ideas. The Rules envisaged the establishment of workers' circles and their unification into the Workers' League of the town. These Leagues, formed in different cities and towns, had to merge into a single All-Russia League.

At first the circle was acutely short of educated people and literature. This began to change in 1894 when Social-Democrat S. P. Shesternin came to Ivanovo and took up the office of the town judge.

Before leaving for Ivanovo, Shesternin visited St. Petersburg and got to know the St. Petersburg Marxists. It was decided that he would become a liaison man between St. Petersburg and Ivanovo Marxists and send to St. Petersburg information about the position and struggle of Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers. The St. Petersburg Marxists provided him with illegal literature. On Lenin's advice Shesternin visited Moscow and met A. I. Yelizarova and, through her, S. I. Mickiewicz and M. F. Vladimirsky.

The talks he had with Lenin and the St. Petersburg and Moscow Social-Democrats finally converted Shesternin to revolutionary Marxism. For four years (from February 1894 to December 1897) he maintained close links with St. Petersburg, Moscow and also Kiev and other cities and towns. Through him the capital was informed about the activities of Social-Democrats and the workers' movement in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, and illegal books regularly came from St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Much effort and risk were involved in getting books but his position as a judge safeguarded Shesternin to a certain extent from suspicion and enabled him to go about his clandestine activities. "I maintained a lively correspondence with Moscow and even more so with St. Petersburg," he recalled. "I constantly received newspapers with mysterious dots and also all sorts of 'applications' to the judge of civil and criminal cases, and these applications contained the necessary information about the revolutionary life of other organisations chemically inscribed with the help of a cipher."

On Shesternin's initiative a bookshop was set up in Ivanovo-Voznesensk in late 1894. Officially it was opened for the purpose of enlightenment by a group of progressive intellectuals on funds they had collected. A member of the workers' study circle was appointed a shop assistant, and Shesternin himself attended to the business of acquiring books. He managed to buy books on credit through progressive publishers in Moscow.

The bookshop soon attracted everybody's attention. Workers visited it and often clubbed together to buy books. The shop was a "light in the dark" and served as a legal camouflage for revolutionary activities. Gradually the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Marxists established contacts with the workers and guided them to conscious and organised struggle.

THE SETTING UP AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MOSCOW WORKERS' LEAGUE

The influence of Narodism largely hindered the dissemination of the ideas of scientific socialism among the workers of Moscow and other cities in Russia's Central industrial area. Most of the representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia and students were still under the sway of old Narodnik traditions, while liberal Narodniks lashed out at the Marxists in a bid to discredit their revolutionary struggle.

Marxist theory was actively opposed by N. A. Kablukov, a Moscow University professor, economist and statistician advocating Narodism. In his newspaper and journal articles he

insisted on the "stability" of the small-scale peasant economy, came out in favour of the peasant commune and attacked the teaching of Marx and Engels on the role and importance of class struggle. N. A. Karyshev, a leading liberal Narodnik and professor at Moscow Agricultural Institute, an economist and statistician, also launched a campaign against the Marxists.

The latter were still not very numerous in Moscow and few of them were well-versed in theory to rebuff the Narodniks. For this reason the frequent meetings and speeches held among the Moscow youth by leaders of liberal Narodniks were not always given the rebuff they deserved.

Lenin dealt the first substantial blow at the Narodniks in Moscow in 1894. In early January of that year Moscow University sponsored a congress of physicians and natural scientists. It was attended by liberal representatives from many *Zemstvos*.^{*} There were some Social-Democrats among the participants but Narodniks formed the overwhelming majority. Illegal youth meetings with heated debates were held under the guise of student parties.

One of such parties was held on January 9, 1894. V. Vorontsov, one of the pillars of liberal Narodism, made a speech at the party. For an hour and a half he expounded the Narodnik doctrine of the role of the peasant commune, worked out allegedly on the basis of scientific and statistical data, and sharply criticised Marxist youth who supposedly did not know "what is what" and applied the doctrine worked out by that "Western economist" Marx to Russian reality.

The Marxists A. Ryazanov, G. Mandelshtam, D. Kalafati, I. Davydov and others contradicted him to which Vorontsov "patronisingly, paternally and sometimes contemptuously mocked the scant knowledge of the young orators, especially chiding them for not having read one book or another".

The chairman of the meeting ridiculed the beaten Marxists

^{*} *Zemstvos* — local self-government bodies dominated by the nobility which were set up in tsarist Russia in 1864, their jurisdiction was restricted to purely local and welfare matters.— *Ed.*

and was about to propose to close the dispute when all of a sudden the "St Petersburg man", that is, Lenin, stepped out of the group of young people crowded at the entrance to the hall and asked to be given the floor

His scathing criticism of the respected Narodnik was at first met with protest, noise and disapproval "How dare he! "What affrontery!" "It's an outrage!" But Lenin soon gained control of the audience and resolutely debunked the Narodnik theory

Everybody present followed the dispute with avid attention. The stranger's unexpectedly daring and knowledgeable speech was stunning, and Vorontsov was forced to tone down his pronouncements and even speak in favour of the young orator. He claimed to be pleased with the young opponent's speech and to be impressed with his remarkable memory, grasp of the subject and conclusions.

Marxist youth were triumphant with their victory. "Lenin's speeches," one of the participants in the party recounted, "produced a tremendous impression. He was spoken about as a new star on the horizon, some spoke about him with pleasure and satisfaction, others with envy and reservations. We'll wait and see, they said."

Lenin's speech at this party was his first public appearance in Moscow. The young members of different revolutionary study circles remained deeply impressed by it for a long time. At the same time it helped rally the Moscow Marxists both ideologically and organisationally.

In January same year Lenin had another meeting with Mickiewicz and together with him visited Vinokurov. He thoroughly studied the work of the "six" and was very keen on the activities of the Moscow group and urged it to pass from propaganda to agitation. He pointed out that he had posed the same task to the St Petersburg group.

He spent the summer of 1894 outside Moscow, at a summer cottage of his relatives in the village of Kuzminki near the Kursk railway line. There he finished his work *What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social*

Democrats. In Moscow Lenin met A. A. Ganshin whom he knew through Social-Democratic activities in St. Petersburg, brothers A. N. and V. N. Maslennikov, and S. I. Mickiewicz. Lenin gave his manuscript about the "friends of the people" to read to Mickiewicz who was overwhelmed. "After I had read his book, Lenin's personality grew in my eyes. I realised that our young Russian Marxist movement found in him a formidable political and theoretical force."

The Russian Marxists lacked a generalising work that would repudiate Narodism, expose its petty-bourgeois essence, frame the economic, political and philosophical ideas of Marxism in an integral system in the light of Russian reality, give answers to problems of practical activities among the proletariat, help work out the proletariat's policy towards the peasants and chart Russia's future development. "At long last such a work has appeared," Mickiewicz rejoiced.

Lenin's work *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, which showed the untenability of the Narodniks' doctrine and called for the establishment of a workers' party, fermented the minds of the revolutionary youth. It was of enormous success. It had a large readership and was passed from hand to hand both in manuscript and hectographed form. "We spent nights hectographing it, though it was comparatively voluminous," N. A. Semashko, a young student of Moscow University at the time, recalled, "hid it where the police could not find it during searches and learned it almost by heart." Young Marxists, to quote Bonch-Bruyevich, compared the book to "heavy artillery" to be used to fortify their positions in combating Narodism.

By the spring of 1894, Moscow Social-Democrats had strengthened their bonds with the mass of the workers, and the number of study circles at factories and works had grown. These circles organised legal and illegal libraries and funds to purchase books, rent flats, and for other purposes. As the network of the circles expanded, the need arose to unite them and to consolidate organisationally progress made in Social-Democratic activities. A paramount step in this direction was made in early April when the Central Workers' Circle was

formed of advanced workers at major factories, railway workshops and printing houses.

Every worker represented not only his own factory study circle, but several others, too, and therefore stood for a part or a whole district of Moscow. This allowed the Central Workers' Circle to obtain information about the state of affairs at all of the city's factories.

A controversy emerged between Mickiewicz and Vinokurov, on the one hand, and Sponti, on the other, in tackling the problem of setting up the Central Workers' Circle. Sponti insisted that the Central Workers' Circle be absolutely independent as a single ideological and organisational centre designed to spearhead the entire Social-Democratic movement in Moscow. Mickiewicz and Vinokurov objected to such a broad and open organisation, given the need for underground activity. They suggested that the movement's conspiratorial functions and ideological leadership should be concentrated in a small group of professional revolutionaries who would work in total secrecy.

This controversy foreshadowed the future disagreement over the methods of building a Social-Democratic organisation in the underground, a disagreement culminating in a fierce struggle between Lenin, who advocated concentration of all the conspiratorial functions in the hands of the smallest possible number of professional revolutionaries, and the Economists who demagogically insisted on a broad-based workers' organisation with elections, reports and universal suffrage.

As a result of these disputes it was decided to organise the Central Workers' Circle, retaining the former leading centre—the "six", and to admit representatives of the workers' study circles to the Central Workers' Circle by co-opting the more reliable workers, rather than through elections. The "six" retained ideological leadership and were responsible for analysing theoretical issues, writing and editing pamphlets and leaflets, and printing them. The Central Workers' Circle had other functions, among them establishing liaison, amassing agitational materials and information about the sentiments among the workers and about the sort of literature they needed, and shifting individual workers from one factory to another

with the aim of establishing new contacts and consolidating old ones.

Moscow's Social-Democratic organisation, which so far had no name, consisted of the following elements: the central ideological leading group, the central workers' circle made up of the representatives of different districts of the city, advanced workers' study circles at factories and a network of grassroot study circles for the beginners. This structure enabled the Social-Democrats to work in stringent conspiracy and yet to maintain constant links with the workers.

The Central Workers' Circle had its own fund and a library of legal and illegal literature. Dementyev's book, *The Factory: What It Gives to and Takes From the People*, enjoyed special popularity. It contained the results of a statistical survey of factories in the Moscow Gubernia, described the working conditions, wages and life of the Moscow workers and compared the data with the situation of the workers in Britain and America. The book was extensively used in propaganda and agitation activities. A. I. Yelizarova gave a popular outline of the contents of the book in her pamphlet, "The Situation of Russian Workers Compared to the Situation of British and American Workers", handwritten copies of which were disseminated among workers.

Advanced workers enthusiastically studied handwritten translations of the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Engels, *Women and Socialism* by Bebel, and *The Erfurt Programme* by Kautsky, as well as publications by the Emancipation of Labour group.

Some of the study circles also had hectographed copies of the first issue of Lenin's *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* and later on his pamphlet "Explanation of the Law on Fines Imposed on Factory Workers", which was immensely popular. Workers who had already had some background knowledge studied Marx's *Capital*. They assimilated Marxist economic doctrine and tried to apply it to their factory work. "I remember one circle meeting," Lyadov recalled, "during which, after a talk about

surplus-value, a worker from the optical shop showed me his precise estimates of the surplus-value he gave his master every year. That was a catching example and the rest of the circle members who worked at a variety of enterprises made similar estimates."

In 1894-95 the Moscow Social-Democrats made their first steps to proceed from propaganda to large-scale agitation work. Agitation leaflets and pamphlets intended for broad sections of the workers now appeared.

In connection with workers' discontent at the Weichelt factory caused by delays in paying wages, Lyadov wrote the leaflet, "Comrades, Our Wages Are Being Cut" which called upon the workers to fight through strike action and to organise a general league and an action fund. Soon afterwards leaflets on different problems were issued at other factories.

Despite their primitive printing technology (handwritten copies, hectograph and later on mimeograph), the leaflets produced a great impact and enjoyed immense popularity. A worker would read them aloud and comment on them while others would gather round him, listening, asking questions and venturing their opinions. The new tactics soon bore fruit and greatly contributed to the effectiveness of the Social-Democratic work.

Agitation through leaflets started above all with the denunciation of factory practices. And as misery, unbearably hard work and lawlessness were the common lot of all workers, "the 'truth about the life of the workers' stirred *everyone*."*

M. A. Silvin's opinion of the early leaflets issued by Moscow Social-Democrats is noteworthy. Whenever he visited Moscow on his way from St. Petersburg to Nizhny Novgorod, he never missed the opportunity of meeting Mickiewicz. "I remember visiting him on my way to St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1894," Silvin recalled. "Mickiewicz had invited two comrades — I don't remember who in particular — for a talk and, after I informed them about the state of affairs in St. Petersburg and

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 398.— *Ed.*

Nizhny Novgorod, they described to me what was new in their revolutionary activities, their shift from propaganda to agitation through distribution of leaflets. Two of them, rather voluminous for a leaflet, hectographed in quarto with caricature drawings in the text, greatly impressed me by the expediency of their content: 'The Talk of Two Factory Owners' and 'They and the Factory Inspector Had Come to Terms'. I was given a copy of the pamphlet, "On Agitation", which I brought to St. Petersburg. It had already circulated in the Social-Democratic study circles of the capital, evoking much comment. It provided the answer to the most acute problem of our activities — how to pass from small-scale circle work to large-scale activities and how to involve the mass of the people in this movement? Lenin had already posed the task of studying the living and working conditions of those employed at every factory."

The pamphlet "On Agitation" written by A. Kremer was brought by Mickiewicz from Vilna, which he visited to get the literature Russian Social-Democrats now received from abroad. Moscow Social-Democrats found the pamphlet interesting, copied it and sent it to neighbouring cities and towns. The Nizhny Novgorod Social-Democrats disagreed sharply with the pamphlet on one issue, which they rightfully viewed as a temporary rejection of political struggle. The issue was thoroughly discussed first in Moscow in the presence of a Nizhny Novgorod delegate and then in Nizhny Novgorod with the participation of a Moscow counterpart. The consensus of opinion was that it was inadmissible to postpone political agitation among workers until a new, higher stage in the development of the workers' movement began, as the pamphlet recommended, or to divorce economic from political struggle.

That resolution was only natural. Constant contacts with Lenin and other members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle could not but affect the activities of the Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod Social-Democrats, who began to successfully adopt new forms of work.

Of the Moscow "six" only Sponti remained on the positions of Kremer's pamphlet "On Agitation". When the problem of new forms of struggle was discussed at a conference in St.

Petersburg, he advocated "broad-based agitation of an almost exclusively economic nature".

Transition to agitation among the working people presupposed a skilful combination of economic and political problems. But how should the latter be presented to the backward sections of the workers? As a matter of fact, backward textile workers, for the most part connected with the countryside and still strongly influenced by religious prejudice and monarchistic illusions, preponderated among the workers of Moscow and Moscow Gubernia.

In this connection Anna Ulyanova, Lenin's sister and associate in revolutionary work, had an important talk with Lenin in autumn 1895.

"After all the Tsar is like a God for uneducated workers. They are still very afraid to take leaflets even with economic demands. Won't we alienate them by this?" she asked Lenin.

"Of course", Lenin answered, "if we speak out against the Tsar and the existing system right away, this would only alienate the workers. But 'politics' permeates everything in everyday life. The rudeness and petty tyranny of constables, police officers and gendarmes and their interference whenever there is disagreement with the factory owners — in the interests of the latter, of course — and the attitude of the powers that be to strikes all quickly show which side they are on. It is only necessary to point this out in leaflets and articles, to show the role of the local constables or gendarmes, and their ideas, gradually guided in this direction, will go even further. This must be emphasised from the very beginning to prevent the illusion that one can gain something by combating factory owners alone."*

Adhering to the stand of Lenin and his associates, the Moscow Social-Democrats launched broad-based agitation among the people in late 1894-early 1895, seeking to turn the spontaneous movement of the workers against their exploiters into an organised struggle against the autocracy and capitalism and to link the workers' movement with scientific socialism.

* *Reminiscences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*, Vol. 1, p. 45.— Ed.

The agitational leaflets "How Much We Earn" and "How Long We Live" were written in late 1894 and hectographed and distributed in early 1895. The former compared data about wages, working hours and standard of life in Russia, Britain and the USA, showing the lack of rights of the Russian proletariat and stressing that "the government of the Russian factory owners is more hideous and shameless than anywhere else". The latter provided facts about the unbearable sanitary conditions of work and the workers' early mortality. The two leaflets called on the workers to fight the capitalists to improve their situation. At the same time another pamphlet, "Tsar Alexander III Is Dead", devoted to purely political matters appeared in Moscow. It analysed the domestic policy of the late Tsar and its class essence, which was hostile to the working people.

Under the influence of the agitation launched, disturbances erupted at some factories in Moscow and its environs as early as 1894-95. In 1894 a strike was held at the Weichelt factory, which was guided by Moscow Social-Democrats and ended in the workers' victory. A strike at the Ramenskoye mill outside Moscow was also a success. A Social-Democratic study circle organised there had conducted extensive preparatory activities before the strike and, as a result, some of the workers' demands were met. In May 1895 weavers at Prokhorov's mill went on strike, demanding higher wages, better living conditions and an end to fraudulent practices in measuring the fabrics they produced. The strike was suppressed by the police and the Cossacks. In June 1895 a strike flared up at the Popovs' tea warehouses and there were clashes between workers at the Mazurin and Gerasimov cotton spinning mills outside Moscow and the Cossacks and police.

In 1894 Moscow Social-Democrats managed to set up a small manually-operated printing press and to print the pamphlet, "The Times in Which We Live", which called for an organised struggle against the autocracy and capital. S. I. Mickiewicz wrote: "In late November we managed to install a hand-operated press at Ye. I. Sponti's flat. On December 1 and

2, Sponti and I composed the first page and made the first testing offprint on December 2. I remember bringing it home at about two o'clock in the morning and showing it triumphantly to A. N. Vinokurov, who shared a flat with me. At dawn on December 3 my flat was searched and, together with other illegal literature, that first offprint was also confiscated. Vinokurov and I were arrested. After my arrest Sponti finished printing the pamphlet and distributed it among the Moscow workers."

The Moscow organisation was dealt a heavy blow when A. N. Vinokurov and S. I. Mickiewicz were arrested, but it did not stop its activities. Fresh forces soon joined it and a new leading group formed in the spring of 1895. Besides the members of the "six" (Lyadov, Sponti and Prokofyev) that remained free, it included A. A. Ganshin, the brothers Maslennikov, A. V. Kirpichnikov, P. D. Durnovo, Ye. A. Petrova and two worker representatives — A. D. Karpuzi and K. F. Boye.

Ye. I. Sponti was entrusted to establish closer links with the Emancipation of Labour group, and in the spring of 1895 he went abroad. He was to inform Plekhanov's group about the nature of the Russian workers' movement and its requirements. He took with him some original and translated manuscripts to be published abroad.

The League of Russian Social-Democrats was set up in Geneva in late 1894 with the aim of publishing pamphlets and periodicals for Russia. The League worked under the guidance of Plekhanov's group, which edited all its publications. Nevertheless, only a minute amount of literature published by the League found its way into Russia. During his meeting with members of the Emancipation of Labour group, Ye. I. Sponti reproached them for not printing popular pamphlets within reach of the mass of the workers. On his request and on his money obtained from the sale of his landed estate, the popular pamphlets "The Working Day", "The Workers' Revolution" and "What Every Worker Should Know and Remember" were printed for Moscow.

Gradually the Social-Democratic activities in Moscow acquired a new scope. This found expression, for example, in the decision for the first time to mark May Day to show solidarity

with workers in all countries and "affinity with the Social-Democratic movement". It was decided to hold the illegal May Day meeting in the woods between the railway stations of Veshnyaki and Sheremetyevskaya along the Kazan railway line. In keeping with the pre-arranged plan, about 300 workers attended the meeting, representing more than one thousand workers organised in workers' study circles at 35 factories, works and shops.

Lyadov delivered a speech about the significance of May Day. The workers who spoke afterwards expressed hope that the Russian workers would use the experience of their brothers abroad and occupy a worthy place in the army of the world proletariat. They also pointed to the need for establishing a single organisation.

This first May Day meeting of Moscow's workers was a major May Day celebration in the Russia of the 1890s. It had paramount importance in activating workers at large in Moscow.

Soon after May Day gathering Moscow Social-Democrats decided to hold a meeting with the participation of advanced workers and to adopt the Rules for Moscow's Social-Democratic organisation. Representatives of neighbouring towns were also to attend the meeting. It was scheduled for June 11, 1895, and members of the leading group had prepared an appeal, in which they officially announced the establishment of the Moscow Workers' League and explained its economic and political tasks.

The meeting was not destined to be held, however, as all the organisation's leaders, who were mostly intellectuals, were arrested in the early hours of June 10. But 400 copies of the appeal announcing the establishment of the Workers' League were nevertheless spread in the factories of Moscow, Moscow Uyezd and even reached some neighbouring towns. It called upon the workers to join the Workers' League to fight together the yoke of capitalists until "the entire land and all factories become public property".

Though the intellectuals within the League had been arrested, the workers' centre went on operating and arranging workers' meetings at empty lots and cemeteries. Its leaders

copied agitation leaflets and poems, distributed them at meetings and factories and pasted on fences. The printing of leaflets was also resumed for the time being.

Lenin called the workers' desire to " 'get into print'... a noble passion for this rudimentary form of war against the whole of the present social system which is based upon robbery and oppression".* Later on he wrote: "...The lower strata of the workers, during the movement of the nineties, were not conscious of its political character. Nevertheless, everyone knows ... that the working-class movement of the nineties acquired an extensive political significance. This was due to the fact that the advanced workers, as always and everywhere, determined the character of the movement, and they were followed by the working masses because they showed their readiness and their ability to serve the cause of the working class, because they proved able to win the full confidence of the masses. Those advanced workers were Social-Democrats..."**

The workers' centre held out till mid-August. On August 16, 1895, people who formed its main body were arrested. Some of those convicted died in prison or in exile, others abandoned revolutionary work, after serving their term in exile, but most of them went to prison and exile with the firm belief in the bright future and remained militant revolutionaries to the end of their lives. Four out of the six members of the leading group — A. Vinokurov, S. Mickiewicz, M. Lyadov and S. Prokofyev — remained active members of the Communist Party until the last.

After the August debacle, the Social-Democratic movement in Moscow was greatly weakened. It was no easy task to give it a new lease of life. Much was done by V. Baturin, an industrial engineer and a staunch revolutionary. "In unbelievably arduous conditions, almost single-handed, he tried to put together the remnants of the former League and to establish new contacts," A. I. Yelizarova wrote. "Having no flats

* V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 398.—*Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 260.—*Ed.*

to hold rendezvous (it was almost impossible to use workers' flats at the time for the purpose because of the low level of consciousness among the workers, primarily among working-class women), he had to resort to meetings in the open air, waiting for workers somewhere on the boulevards or outside the city. It was bearable in summer but in late autumn he caught a terrible cold. I met him when he was already suffering from consumption, his face bore the stamp of death but he continued striving after his goal with the same austere inflexibility. He died in the spring of 1896." Thanks to his efforts, broken contacts gradually began to be reestablished and new study circles formed.

Lenin came to Moscow from a trip abroad in September 1895, when there was a comparative lull in the activities of the Workers' League. He was to organise there, the same as in other cities, the systematic dispatch of articles and documents to Switzerland for the *Rabotnik* journal which the Emancipation of Labour group had agreed to publish. Lenin, however, failed to find anyone of the Workers' League leaders in Moscow: all of them had been arrested.

He wrote in his letter to P. B. Axelrod: "... I was in Moscow, I saw no one, for there was no trace of the 'Teacher of Life' [Ye. I. Sponti.— *Author*]. Is he all right? If you know anything about him and have an address, write to him to send it to us, otherwise we cannot find any contacts there. Great havoc has been played there, but it seems that some people have survived and the work did not cease. We have material from there — a description of some strikes. If you have not had it, write and we shall send it to you."*

During his stay in Moscow Lenin went to Orekhovo-Zuyevo and arranged support from the local Marxists for the *Rabotnik* journal. He shared his impression of that old industrial town in the above-mentioned letter to P. B. Axelrod: "...A purely manufacturing town with tens of thousands of inhabitants, whose only means of livelihood is the mills. The mill

* V. I. Lenin, "To P. B. Axelrod. November, 1895", *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, p. 20.— *Ed.*



Leaders of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle
for the Emancipation of the Working Class:
V. Starkov, G. Krzhizhanovsky, V. I. Lenin, Yu. Martov (*sitting*);
A. Malchenko, P. Zaporozhets, A. Vaneyev (*standing*)



Worker members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle:
 I. Babushkin, P. Gribakin, B. Zinovyev, M. Kalinin,
 V. Knyazev, N. Poletayev, V. Shelgunov, I. Yakovlev



Members of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League:
 M. Bagayev, S. Shesternin, O. Varentsova, K. Otrokov



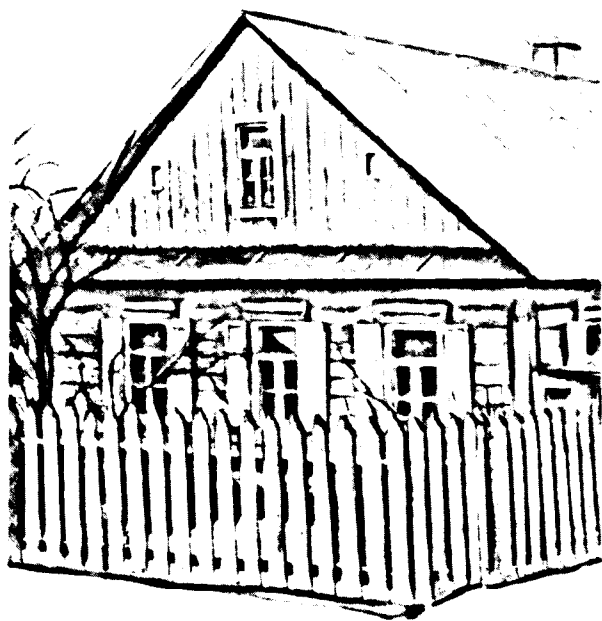
Members of the Moscow Workers' League:
K. Boye, M. Vladimirsky, V. Vorovsky, S. Mickiewicz,
Ye. Nemchinov, F. Polyakov, S. Prokofyev, A. Ulyanova



Members of the Kiev League of Struggle:
A. Polyak, S. Pomerants, V. Kryzhanovskaya



Members of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle:
I. Babushkin, G. Petrovsky, I. Lalayants



The house in Minsk where
the First RSDLP Congress took place

management is the sole authority. The mill office 'runs' the town. There is the sharpest division of the people into workers and bourgeois. Hence, the workers' frame of mind is rather oppositional, but, after the recent smash-up there, so few of our people are left and all of them so closely watched that contacts are very difficult. However, we shall be able to deliver the literature."^{*}

Meanwhile mimeographs designed by Radin were made in Moscow with the participation of Bonch-Bruyevich. The material about five strikes sent by Lenin to Switzerland had been printed on one of them. It was published by the *Rabotnik* in a survey "The Tsarist Government and the Workers' Movement in 1896".

In late 1895-early 1896 disconnected Marxist study circles (headed by the Velichkins, Vladimirsky and others) united, bringing back to life the Moscow Workers' League. Advanced workers and the revolutionary intellectuals shared the desire to work jointly, and this helped resume the activities of the routed organisation.

A new structure for the organisation was elaborated at several meetings with the participation of workers. The Workers' League was, as before, headed by a central leading group consisting of several intellectuals and six or seven advanced workers, one for every district. The central group had the following functions: to guide the movement, to print and deliver illegal literature, and to maintain contacts with other towns and abroad.

An assembly of representatives, one for an enterprise, formed a consultative body under the central group. A library and a public fund were established by the Workers' League. The fund was based on the entrance fees and the monthly dues of two kopecks per rouble earned. Part of the money went towards the purchase of books, but most of it was intended to support strikes and those who had suffered for taking part in the revolutionary struggle.

^{*} V. I. Lenin, "To P. B. Axelrod. November, 1895", *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, pp. 20-21.— *Ed.*

The nascent Workers' League developed great potential from the outset and soon united up to 1,000 workers. In February 1896, the League sent a message to the French workers on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Paris Commune. The message was signed by 605 workers from 28 factories. It emphasised the historic role of the French proletariat and expressed the hope that the Russian working class would soon occupy a worthy place in the world army of the revolutionary proletariat. "Russian workers have taken up the old revolutionary banner soaked with the blood of so many martyrs from among them and the intelligentsia and equipped themselves with the ideas of scientific socialism to take their place under the common red banner of the world proletariat," the message read. "...We hope that it will not be long before the fetters of absolutism are broken and the Russian proletariat can openly appear on the world historical scene."

Signatures were collected in workers' study circles after talks on the historic importance of the Paris Commune. A leaflet was written and hectographed to mark the 25th anniversary of the Commune. In June 1896 the Workers' League received two return messages from French workers expressing solidarity with the Moscow workers.

As the Moscow organisation grew stronger, its ties with other cities and towns expanded. Besides St. Petersburg and Ivanovo-Voznesensk, with which contacts were especially stable, Moscow Social-Democrats established links with Nizhny Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Saratov, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Oryol, Vilna and Minsk. Frequent arrests severed ties and nevertheless they made it possible to exchange experience and to get legal and illegal literature, including from abroad. V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich and V. M. Velichkina were at the time in charge of deliveries of illegal literature from abroad. In spring 1896 they left for Switzerland, contacted the Emancipation of Labour group and organised regular deliveries of revolutionary literature to Moscow Social-Democrats. Contacts with Social-Democrats in the West were also becoming stronger. The Moscow Workers' League decided to send V. I. Zasulich, a member of Plekhanov's group, as its delegate to the International Socialist Congress in London.

The workers' movement in Moscow mounted under the impact of the summer 1896 strikes in St. Petersburg. Moscow Social-Democrats changed their tactics, passing from propaganda that had formed the backbone of their activities to large-scale agitation. On June 15, the central group of the Workers' League issued several appeals in support of St. Petersburg comrades and called for strikes at Moscow's factories. "A strike of no precedent in Russia is being held in St. Petersburg," one of the appeals stated. "Three weeks ago 30,000 workers at 17 factories stopped work and persist in demanding the Ten Hour Day bill not only for themselves but for all Russian workers... How can we let down the expectations of our St. Petersburg comrades? How can we not support them in this moment of trial?"

These appeals were the first documents to be signed by the Moscow Workers' League.

In connection with the St. Petersburg strike, the Moscow Social-Democrats held a meeting on June 16. More than 300 workers assembled in the forest outside the Lyublino railway station. The meeting solemnly proclaimed the foundation of the Moscow Workers' League and resolved to start preparations for a general strike in solidarity with St. Petersburg workers.

Workers at some factories responded to the appeal of the Workers' League to support St. Petersburg comrades. In early July workshops of the Moscow-Kursk railway line went on strike demanding payment for the days of Nicholas II's coronation and an end to certain abuses. This demand for payment for the coronation days lent the strike a clearly political aspect. Similar demands were made by workers at the Moscow-Brest railway depot. There were disturbances in the workshops of the Ryazan and Yaroslavl railway lines and at the Bromley and Gujon works. "In several days' time a general strike would have erupted in Moscow," the League's report for 1895-1896 pointed out, "but wholesale arrests were made on July 6." About 60 people, including 50 workers were rounded up by the police.

However, the secret police did not confine itself to repressions alone. Confronted with the speedily growing workers' move-

ment, it resorted to a new weapon — “police socialism”, or the so-called Zubatovism, practices named after the chief of the Moscow secret police department Zubatov.

Zubatov realised that the secret police would not be able to cope with the revolutionary workers’ movement through repressions alone. To distract the workers from political struggle, he used, along with repression, more “flexible” forms in a bid to reconcile workers with autocracy by meeting their minor economic demands. He adopted a fairly “liberal” attitude toward those arrested on July 6, promising to legalise the workers’ movement and even help to satisfy their minor economic needs, provided they renounced “politics”. He also sought to set the workers against the revolutionary intelligentsia and with this aim in view he later set up workers’ organisations of a purely economic type under strict police surveillance.

Some of the unstable elements swallowed Zubatov’s bait, and agents provocateurs infiltrated the Moscow League. From that time on Zubatov’s tactics of combating Social-Democratic workers’ movement was applied on a large scale in other industrial centres.

Lenin warned workers against legal Zubatov-sponsored organisations, calling them “the traps often set by the police, who ... try to make use of legal organisations to plant their *agents provocateurs* in the illegal organisations”.*

The attempts by the tsarist secret police to subordinate the workers’ movement were a complete fiasco. The mounting revolutionary workers’ movement swept aside Zubatov-sponsored organisations. Zubatov’s agents provocateurs, however, caused considerable damage to the Moscow organisation: one exposure followed another. Yet Moscow’s Social-Democrats continued their revolutionary activities.

The remaining members of the Workers’ League (the group of L. P. Radin and A. N. Orlov) resumed work. On August 8, 1896, a leaflet was issued announcing that the Union was operating and calling on the workers to continue their struggle. “All we have to do, comrades, is not to lose

* V. I. Lenin, “What Is to Be Done?”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 455.—Ed.

heart nor to foresake our cause Our fund is intact, and the Moscow Workers' League is to operate as before," the leaflet stated

The League continued guiding the proletarian movement and issuing leaflets addressed to the workers at different enterprises, calling for unity and struggle against the factory owners to ensure shorter hours and better working and living conditions "Our situation is growing worse Our 'poor' master the government began cutting rates in 1892 apparently for fear of going bust What does the government care that we are at the end of our tether or that our families are starving?! Threatened with a strike at a bad moment, it met some of our demands and promised to meet the rest of them But when the strike was called off and the situation calmed down, our demands were ignored," stated a leaflet addressed to the workers at the Moscow Kursk railway workshops in connection with disturbances there

The Workers' League not only guided strike action in Moscow but also exercised influence on neighbouring towns It also had a bearing on the students In early November, when disturbances flared up at Moscow University, the League made an appeal to the students, urging them to join the workers' movement and fight together with the proletariat

In 1896, L Radin, a gifted chemist, disciple of Mendeleyev and indefatigable revolutionary, set up an evening school with lectures on Sundays for workers affiliated to the Kazan railway line Using legal opportunities, Social Democrats skilfully spread the Marxist ideas History and geography classes were meant to form the workers' ideas and an accounting course included elements of political economy A library was set up at school, which was also used to establish contacts for illegal activities. A I Yelizarova wrote "That school had an important role to play in the history of the workers' movement in Moscow "

Radin also did much to organise the printing of leaflets and illegal literature By late 1896 the Workers' League already had several mimeographs faultlessly operating under Radin's supervision

In the early hours of November 11, 1896, the Workers' League was again raided by the police. Trepov, the acting chief police officer of Moscow, triumphantly reported: "The operation bore brilliant results." Trepov's jubilation was a bit hasty, however, for the Moscow Workers' League did not go out of existence. Fresh forces, among them students of Moscow University and the Moscow Technical School among them A. Baturin and S. Ozerov, replaced those who had been arrested. Only three days after the arrests the League issued a leaflet calling on the Moscow workers not to back down and to continue fighting under the League's guidance. "The government believes it can eradicate the workers' movement that has already caused it so much trouble. It is mistaken, however, because the workers' movement is a product of reality and no force in the world is capable of putting an end to it... Our League, whose members work at almost all of Moscow's factories, cannot be destroyed by persecutions or raids. It has put down deep roots among the workers to be able to continue its activities courageously and unceasingly."

Despite the unending arrests, in 1897 the League stood at the head of strikes for shorter hours. Workers insisted on 10, and in some cases, 8-hour working days. Guided by the League, this struggle spread to nearly all of Moscow's factories and bore tangible results. At some enterprises the working day was reduced to 10 hours.

The Bromley plant saw an especially militant strike. For two days the strikers crowded at the entrance to the plant, demanding shorter hours. The police was brought into action and 21 people were arrested. But the workers stood their ground and the owners had to yield. After that strike, which forcefully demonstrated the might of the working class, Moscow factory owners became more compliant. The working day was reduced to 10 hours at other major machine-building factories, too.

When the tsarist government was forced to pass a law limiting the working day, the League issued in July 1897 a leaflet calling upon the workers to fight for their political rights, too. "From January 1, 1898, in keeping with the

new factory law," leaflet said, "the working day at factories cannot last more than 11 1/2 hours on weekdays, nor more than 10 hours at night and on the eve of holidays, while previously we had to work 12, 14, and even 16 hours... This law is especially important, comrades, because we alone, through our own effort, made the government pass it... This law, however, is only inaugurating our further victories. We demand even shorter hours and higher wages. We demand that the government not interfere with our discussing our own labour affairs, fighting capitalists and upholding the interests of the working class. In this connection we demand freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and the right to strike as the only means and weapon by which we can make our exploiter factory owners yield."

Despite all persecutions and repressions, Moscow's Social-Democratic movement went from strength to strength, bringing ever wider sections of the proletariat under its influence and imbuing them with socialist consciousness. Neither persecutions, arrests, prisons, exiles, nor Zubatov's provocations could make the Moscow proletariat, awakening to conscious class struggle, abandon the path of revolution.

Struggle waged by workers of Moscow and of other cities and towns of the country in the mid-1890s played a great role in the development of the proletarian movement. It united workers, organised them, and taught them to defend their interests and to better understand their class goals and needs.

The Moscow Workers' League holds pride of place in this arduous and heroic struggle. At the very end of 1897 the police staged another raid on the League's leaders, but in a short while it was again operating on a large scale. Following the example of the St. Petersburg organisation, the Moscow Workers' League was transformed in early 1898 into a League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. On the eve of the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party the Moscow League of Struggle prepared a programme which defined the immediate task of the workers' movement as the overthrow of the autocracy

and its final goal as the eradication of capitalism and transfer of the means of production to the working class.

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE IVANOVVO-VOZNESENSK WORKERS' LEAGUE

The activities of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Marxists exercised tremendous influence on the Social-Democratic movement in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. A Social-Democratic organisation emerged in Ivanovo-Voznesensk under Lenin's ideological influence and with the assistance of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Social-Democrats. Advanced workers took an active part in its establishment which becomes strong by the late 1890s.

The 1895 May Day meeting showed that the Marxist workers' movement was speedily gathering momentum in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. The meeting was attended by 30 people who worked out a far-reaching plan of Social-Democratic activities. A decision was made to unite the study circles into a single Social-Democratic organisation and to call it the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League.

The leading centre of the Workers' League was founded soon after the May Day meeting. Among its members were O. A. Varentsova, F. A. Kondratyev, A. A. Yevdokimov, S. P. Shesternin, N. N. Kudryashov, M. A. Bagayev and K. N. Ot-rokov.

The former Rules of the circle were replaced by the new Rules, which was called "Practical Grounds for the Workers' Movement Determined in Keeping with the Circumstances of the Given Moment". They defined the final goal of the League in the following way: "1) to take accumulated labour away from the hands of the private persons and to make it social property and 2) to work out a means of using this wealth."

According to the Rules, the League was made up of separate local circles that carried out propaganda among advanced workers. The Rules pointed out that League members could

be sent to other regions to carry out propaganda. Big study circles, the Rules stated, united into local leagues that fought against the capitalists through strikes for higher wages and shorter hours. The local leagues, in their turn, united into a workers' party that waged struggle "in the field of politics". In this way, these leagues, according to the Rules, were to engage exclusively in economic struggle, paving the way for the establishment of a working-class political party.

United in a fairly strong organisation, the workers, the Rules went on to say, made the following demands to the government: "1) legal recognition of the workers' leagues, funds and libraries without any control by government officials; 2) permission for the workers to consult about their own affairs and to combat the factory owners through strikes; 3) the inviolability of workers or any member of the state without trial; 4) the legalisation of the 8-hour day; 5) unrestricted freedom of speech and the press; 6) control over factory operations."

The meeting of these demands would make the workers so strong that "it would be possible to change the existing system on the basis of fraternal labour without bloodshed".

The Rules of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League showed the ideological and political immaturity characteristic of some of the Social-Democratic organisations in the 1890s. They also bore the imprint of opportunism that came into being in the form of Economism. The erroneous provision of the Rules about the gradual and peaceful transformation of the existing system caused heated debate. It was opposed by Bagayev, Shesternin, and especially vehemently by Varentsova, who insisted on including into the Rules the clause about the overthrow of the autocracy and the revolutionary methods of combating it. However, the authors of the Rules — Kondratyev and Yevdokimov, who had already then gravitated towards Economism — managed to retain the original wording.

The establishment of the Workers' League enlivened the activities of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Social-Democrats, making them better organised and purposeful. Much attention was paid to extending their knowledge. Papers were read and

discussed and works of Marx and Engels studied. "Never before did members of the organisation work so perseveringly to expand their knowledge as in the summer of 1895," Shesternin pointed out. "As a result most of the comrades whose education was limited to three years of primary school very quickly became class-conscious and well-educated revolutionaries."

In October 1895 a big strike flared up at the Ivanovo-Voznesensk textile mills. It involved 2,000 weavers and lasted for 15 days. The strike was caused by the reduction of rates by 20-25 per cent. Negotiations with the managers proved futile, and after they refused to raise the rates, the indignant workers went on strike. Every day they assembled in streets, squares and flats and discussed their situation. "The picture was unheard-of for Russia. The entire town seethed with struggle and all the minds were stirred by that strike," the Social-Democratic journal *Rabotnik*, which was published abroad, reported about the strike. "The owners of all the textile mills were very much alarmed, fearing the strike... would prove infectious for their workers, especially since the latter obviously sympathised with the strikers."

The strike posed the Workers' League the problem of directing strike action and of passing to new forms of struggle — to mass agitation. Many of the organisation's members were no longer satisfied with restricting themselves to propaganda in study circles. There was an argument in the Workers' League about participation in the strike. O. A. Varentsova, M. A. Bagayev and N. I. Makhov insisted on issuing leaflets and demanded that the Workers' League spearhead the strike, send its agitators to the strikers and call upon the workers at other factories to join the strike. However, the League's Chairman F. A. Kondratyev and Secretary A. A. Yevdokimov turned down these proposals. In their opinion, the Workers' League was still not ready for open actions and its participation in the strike might result in its routing. The argument lasted for two nights, and as a result a compromise decision was made: the League as a whole would withhold from action, but its individual members could take part in leading the strike.

Following that decision M. A. Bagayev and N. I. Makhov made their way to the strikers and staged the first organised meeting in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. They succeeded in organising the strike, too, and spoke to the strikers, helping them formulate their demands for the factory owners.

On October 8, 1895, the Governor of Vladimir, together with about 1,000 soldiers and Cossacks, came to Ivanovo-Voznesensk. Representatives of the strikers visited the Governor and presented their demands to increase the rates and dismiss Sveshnikov, the manager who harassed them with exorbitant fines.

The negotiations bore no fruit and the workers had to continue their strike. On October 11 the weavers again held a meeting. The Cossacks were called in and ruthlessly dealt with the strikers. Though the strike was suppressed by a military force, it brought partial victory to the workers: the hated manager was dismissed and the rates were slightly raised.

The strike stirred workers in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Region, strengthened the ties between the Workers' League and the mass of the workers and raised its prestige. The strike was much spoken about and the Moscow Workers' League issued a pamphlet dealing with it. Members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle attentively followed it, and the report written about the strike by O. A. Varentsova and S. P. Shesternin and edited by Lenin was sent abroad and published by the journal *Rabotnik*. Furthermore, that report was included in the first issue of the newspaper *Rabocheye Dyelo* (Workers' Cause) which the leaders of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle were preparing for publication.

By early 1896 the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League had become a strong Social-Democratic organisation made up of several workers' study circles and with five secret addresses. Reliable contacts had been established with Shuya and Kokhma. The League members travelled there, conducted classes and took part in the local Social-Democrats' meetings. The Workers' League emerged as a Social-Democratic centre of the entire textile region.

The October 1895 strike of the weavers invigorated and added scope to the propaganda activities of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League. It now ran study circles of two types — for uninitiated workers and for advanced workers. Those who attended the latter circles heard papers on different topics, studied political economy by reading Marx's works, the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia and Western Europe and learnt the rules of secret work and how to behave at interrogations. These were "workers' universities" of sorts, with the help of which advanced workers augmented their knowledge and developed politically, often becoming in no way inferior to representatives of the intelligentsia.

Stepped-up activities of Social-Democrats in Ivanovo-Voznesensk and the neighbouring areas led to enhanced police surveillance. In his report about the 1895 strikes the Vladimir Governor complained that appeals and leaflets of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, the Moscow Workers' League and so on were brought to factories and from there found their way to the countryside. Those leaflets "infected the minds" of the workers with "the poison of the socialist doctrine" and urged them to oppose the authorities, to hold strikes and so on.

In January 1896 the police managed to track down the Social-Democratic organisation of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. The arrests of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League leaders severely undermined the organisation, but it continued to operate and grow under the guidance of Varentsova who escaped arrest. Many rank-and-file members of the Union also remained free. Fresh forces nurtured by the organisation came to replace the leaders arrested by the police.

By early 1897 the Workers' League had grown stronger and united about 100 members. It faced the problem of organising its activities on a new basis and worked out a draft of "The Rules of the Organisation." The draft placed emphasis on shifting work to factories. Cells were formed at factories with no less than three League members. Each factory cell elected an executive organiser and an assembly of "delegates" guided the work of the entire organisation.

Every "delegate" was registered under a special number.

This organisational restructuring made the League closer to the workers, extended its influence, ensured a strong base at factories, and helped pass from propaganda to agitation.

The draft of "The Rules of the Organisation" was endorsed at the meeting of the Workers' League activists held in late April 1897. The meeting decided to mark May Day on the forthcoming Sunday. The May Day meeting was held in the woods on May 4 and was attended by 46 people. It formalised the setting up of 12 factory cells, each numbering from three to eight members. Each cell also immediately elected its organiser.

The Workers' League was not to be active for long, however. In June 1897 the police again dealt a blow at the organisation, arresting 18 members, 14 of them workers. The bookshop which, according to the gendarme officials, served as a "club for the leaders and organisers of the secret society" was closed down. Nearly all the leaders of the organisation were sentenced to different terms of exile.

The second routing of the Workers' League left the organisation virtually without leaders. Nevertheless, it had already deeply rooted itself among the workers, and no arrests could paralyse its activities for long. By autumn 1897 there had been an upsurge of activities. New people joined the Workers' League and factory cells resumed their work.

In August 1897 F. A. Afanasyev, a weaver from St. Petersburg, an outstanding worker revolutionary, and an active member of St. Petersburg and Moscow revolutionary study circles of the late 1880s and early 1890s, came to Ivanovo-Voznesensk from exile. An experienced conspirator and organiser, he immediately joined the revolutionary activities. By that time he had a sound Marxist background and had greatly contributed to rallying the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Social-Democrats and educating new, young members. "You should have seen the skill with which he chose people, the patience with which he attended to them and the passion with which he developed their way of thinking, pointing to all the short-

comings of capitalist society. His face bore no sign of conceit or superiority. He seemed destined to become a preacher of revolutionary ideas," S. I. Balashev, professional revolutionary and Afanasyev's friend and follower, wrote in his memoirs about him.

As the Workers' League stepped up its activities, strikes mounted in Ivanovo-Voznesensk and other industrial regions of Vladimir Gubernia. In late 1897-early 1898 the League headed the first general strike of weavers, spinners and printers in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. That was the biggest workers' action after the St. Petersburg strike.

The strike began at Garelin's mill on December 23, and by December 30 had spread to almost all the major enterprises in the town. It was caused by the fact that in connection with the law introducing the 11 1/2-hour day factory owners decided to compensate their losses by cutting the number of holidays.

The 15,000-strong army of strikers was unanimous in its demands to reinstate the previous number of holidays, to finish work on the eve of holidays at six o'clock p. m. instead of ten o'clock, to free those arrested during the strike, to pay wages for the time of the strike, and to release women from work one month before childbirth, giving them eight-rouble grants from capital accumulated on fines.

The town looked like a military camp: soldiers and Cossacks patrolled the streets and guards were placed at the factory gates. Plainclothesmen snooped around in crowds and red-pencilled the backs of workers, who were then arrested.

The strike was led by the more energetic members of the Workers' League. They organised meetings of the strikers, worked towards the unity of workers' demands, supported the spirit of organised struggle among the strikers by spreading among them handwritten leaflets for lack of printed matter and distributed illegal literature.

During the strike a letter was received from the Moscow Workers' League to the workers of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. The Muscovites warmly greeted the strikers and wished them suc-

cess. The letter called for a joint struggle for the interests of the Russian proletariat: "Ivanovo-Voznesensk comrades! Remember that it is not only your destiny that depends on the staunchness of your behaviour in this particular case. Fighting for your interests, you defend the interests of the entire Russian working class. Let this idea breathe energy into you to continue the struggle you have started. The Moscow Workers' League greets you and, wishing you success in fighting the exploiters, will do everything possible to help you in your right cause. Forward, comrades! We, too, will see the dawn."

The factory owners and local authorities sought to crush the strikers' opposition. They began sacking workers and evicting them from factory barracks. Some of the workers resumed work but the majority did not surrender and went on with the strike. The owners were forced to yield — the former number of holidays was reinstated and the hours of work on the eve of holidays were reduced at some factories.

The Rabotnik News-Sheet carried an excerpt from a letter written by an eye-witness of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk events. It emphasised: "The patience with which the strikers held on and the determination with which the first strikers stopped work show that it is no longer a mob but a single organised society determined to defend its interests."

Guided by the revolutionary Social-Democrats, the Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers displayed unprecedented cohesion and organisation. The strike steeled the workers, convinced them of their own might and gave them greater confidence in the Social-Democrats. Another step had been taken along the road of merging Social-Democracy, scientific socialism and the workers' movement.

The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' League was the first workers' Social-Democratic organisation to exercise a tremendous influence on the development of the workers' movement in that big industrial region. It played an important role in educating advanced workers through revolutionary actions, thus preparing them for understanding the ideas of scientific socialism.

In its activities the Workers' League relied on a wide section of Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers. Though it had lost about 100 advanced worker revolutionaries as a result of arrests, the organisation that enjoyed prestige and support among the workers at large withstood those terrible blows and continued operating, fighting and strengthening its ties with the Social-Democrats of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Kiev and other cities.

Unflinching courage, staunchness and organisation in opposing the autocracy and capitalism placed the textile workers of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk industrial region in the front ranks of the Russian proletariat. Lenin has this in mind when he compared Ivanovo-Voznesensk workers with those of St. Petersburg and Moscow and later called them "the flower of our proletarian army".*

* * *

The Social-Democratic movement in Moscow and Ivanovo-Voznesensk developed in extremely complicated circumstances, subjected to ruthless persecutions and political repressions. Police arrests repeatedly took away the more experienced and active members from its ranks and destroyed the organisations formed through so much effort. Nevertheless, the revolutionary Marxists in those cities courageously overcame all the difficulties and obstacles. Strengthening their connections with the proletariat and firmly relying on advanced workers, they launched revolutionary activity anew, bringing the ruined organisations back to life.

The Moscow and the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Workers' Leagues did a great deal to unite socialism with the workers' movement in Russia's Central industrial area. Besides propagandising Marxist ideas in the workers' circles, they guided growing strike actions at factories and worked to turn spontaneous

* V. I. Lenin, "Speech at a Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet and the All-Russia Trade Union Congress. January 17, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 403.— *Ed.*

strikes and disturbances into organised actions. Quite a few professional revolutionaries and leaders of the workers' movement were educated politically in the Workers' Leagues.

The Workers' Leagues played an important role in the development of the Social-Democratic workers' movement of the 1890s. They stood at the sources of Bolshevism, and it was on their basis that the Moscow and the Ivanovo-Voznesensk committees of the R. S. D. L. P. were formed.

Chapter Four

THE KIEV AND EKATERINOSLAV LEAGUES OF STRUGGLE FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

The Marxist workers' movement in the country's major centres — St. Petersburg and Moscow — in the mid-1890s greatly influenced the development of the proletarian struggle and the emergence and strengthening of the Social-Democratic organisations in other regions of the country, including the Ukraine. Kiev and Ekaterinoslav were the main centres of the workers' and the Social-Democratic movement there. Though differing in their social and economic make-up, these cities nevertheless had much in common and played a considerable part in solving the pending problems of the initial stage of the movement for the emancipation of the working class.

At this time Kiev was one of the country's major trade and industrial centres. In 1897 it had 247,700 residents and 177 factories, among them 26 machine-building, metal-working and mechanical enterprises. The largest of them were the Main Workshops of the South-Western railway line (2,500 workers), the South-Russian machine-building plant (800 workers), the Gretter and Krivanek machine-building works (employing about 1,000 workers in 1894), and the Arsenal works employing 750 workers in 1897. However huge mass of Kiev workers was dispersed at numerous small workshops and enterprises of a cottage-industry type where exploitation was especially harsh.

At the same time Kiev was an important centre of social and political thought and revolutionary propaganda among the workers and had rich revolutionary traditions.

Unlike Kiev, Ekaterinoslav was a comparatively small provincial town but when the Ekaterininskaya railway line was built, it quickly turned into a major centre of steel-making and metal-working industries. The presence of vacant lands and the rich deposits of iron ore and coal accounted for the fact that

capitalism developed there faster than in other regions of the country.

In the fifteen years between 1883-1898 the number of factories in the Ekaterinoslav Gubernia more than trebled and the number of industrial workers increased nearly eight-fold, from 13,608 to 108,311. In 1898 the Bryansk steel works (now G. I. Petrovsky works) alone employed 7,132 workers. All in all more than 150 factories, including 19 major steel-making and metal-working enterprises, were operating at the time in Ekaterinoslav.

Another feature made it different from St. Petersburg, Moscow and other major university centres: in those years it was not under "enhanced surveillance" and this facilitated underground activities there. It was a place where the authorities banished those who engaged in political activities. Many advanced workers and representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia who had already been through the school of the revolutionary struggle against the tsarist autocracy were banished to Ekaterinoslav from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kiev, Rostov-on-Don and other cities and towns after serving their prison terms there.

The rapid growth of the industrial proletariat, its high concentration at large enterprises and the town's position as a place of deportation for those under police surveillance for political offence were factors that determined the emergence of Ekaterinoslav in the late 1890s as a major centre of the Russian Social-Democratic workers' movement.

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EARLY SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATIONS IN KIEV AND EKATERINOSLAV

The Social-Democratic movement began to emerge in Kiev and Ekaterinoslav in the late 1880s-early 1890s. As elsewhere, the Social-Democratic movement appeared and developed there while Narodism fell into ruin and Marxist ideas increasingly spread among the progressive intelligentsia and advanced workers.

The first Social-Democratic circle was formed in Kiev in early 1889 by Dr. E. A. Abramovich who had come from Minsk after graduating from Derpt University, and already had some experience of Social-Democratic activity among the Minsk workers. Before this, Abramovich had lived and studied in Paris. Shortly after his arrival in Kiev he managed to establish contacts with the revolutionary-minded students and workers and to organise a Social-Democratic study circle attended by about 30 workers, for the most part from railway workshops.

The syllabus of classes with workers gives an idea of the trend and content of the work of the circle. Among other things, it stated: "The working people constitute the only social force capable of accomplishing the social and political tasks of the Russian state. The accomplishment of any social task whatsoever in Russia, indisputably depends on the working class." The syllabus contained a long list of books "to be read by workers", among them the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels, *Wage-Labour and Capital* and *Capital* by Marx, *Socialism and the Political Struggle* and *Our Differences* by G. V. Plekhanov and *Condition of the Working Class in Russia* by Flerovsky. The circle also set up a library of illegal literature.

The arrests that soon followed broke up the first Social-Democratic organisation in Kiev. Nevertheless, its influence left an imprint in the minds of its members and shaped their further revolutionary activities.

In the early 1890s social and political life in Kiev again showed signs of animation. This could be especially seen among the students who were painstakingly looking for answers to problems of social development. The process was boosted by the transition period from Narodism to Marxism.

The revolutionary youth evolved their world outlook and their convictions when, on the one hand, the Narodnik traditions were still strong and, on the other, they were ever more at variance with the country's economic life and with Marxist teaching. Marxism attracted the attention and interest of progressive young people. In self-education circles students ardently studied individual Marxist writings that were brought

in false-bottomed suitcases by university students and by people returning from trips abroad.

Some Marxist groups copied Marx's and Engels' works by hand and hectographed them. For instance, in early 1894 the student circle at Kiev University hectographed the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* with the preface written by Marx and Engels to the Russian edition and G. V. Plekhanov's article "A Few Words from the Translator". This circle also printed Marx's *Commodity, Money and Capital* and Engels' *Socialism in Germany*. "Revolutionary literature kept on coming in," Lunacharsky, who at the time attended Marxist circles in Kiev, recalled. "We received *The Erfurt Programme* by Kautsky, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and also *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Frederick Engels. All these books and pamphlets were avidly read and the readership was constantly growing and expanding... A library of illegal books was formed."

Among the widely-read books were publications by the Emancipation of Labour group, especially works by Plekhanov and the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat*. These works explained to young readers the insolvency of Narodism and fostered in them the conviction that the working class was the only force capable of translating into life the lofty ideals of socialism.

Well-known disciples and associates of Lenin, in particular A. V. Lunacharsky, P. K. Zaporozhets and I. A. Sammer, began their revolutionary activities in Kiev student study circles. The latter two became active members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

An especially significant part in the development of the Social-Democratic movement in Kiev was played by a group of students that emerged from a student study circle in 1891-1892 and passed into history under the name of the Russian Social-Democratic Group. It was organised by two students: Y. M. Lyakhovsky, a member of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle from the autumn of 1895, and B. L. Eidelman, subsequently the leader of the Kiev Social-Democratic *Rabocheye*

Dyelo group. In late 1892-early 1893 Yu. D. Melnikov, an outstanding leader during the initial period of the Social-Democratic movement, joined the Russian Social-Democratic Group. By the time he came to Kiev in late 1891, he was a mature Social-Democrat who had experience in revolutionary underground work in Kharkov and Rostov-on-Don, had been imprisoned in Kharkov and the St. Petersburg Kresty, had met M. I. Brusnev and other pioneers of the Russian Social-Democratic movement and was familiar with the activities of the first Social-Democratic circles in St. Petersburg, Kiev, Penza and Kazan. He extensively used his rich revolutionary experience in Kiev. According to B. L. Eidelman, the work of Yu. D. Melnikov, who became a leader of the emergent student study circle (this is what the Russian Social-Democratic Group initially was), was one of the factors that enabled it to quickly become a strong Social-Democratic organisation.

At the beginning the Russian Social-Democratic Group undertook propagandising Marxism primarily among the students. In 1894 it translated into Russian and published Kautsky's pamphlet *The Main Principles of the Erfurt Programme*. The members of the group provided the pamphlet with a foreword, in which they subscribed to the main principles of the Erfurt Programme. This fact alone shows the ideological and theoretical maturity of it as a Social-Democratic organisation. Lenin read Kautsky's pamphlet about the Erfurt Programme published by the Kiev group and it is now among the books in his Kremlin library.

In the foreword to Kautsky's pamphlet, members of the Russian Group criticised the Narodnik ideology and tactics. "We, Social-Democrats in Russia," they wrote, "want to form a workers' party whose prime political task will be the overthrow of autocracy." The authors of the foreword also correctly appraised the Social-Democratic attitude towards other democratic elements. "The singling out of the Social-Democrats," they wrote, "from the other social revolutionary parties is not tantamount to their refusal to support the democratic elements in the struggle against the tsarist autocracy." "We are ready," they declared, "to assist all honest and sound attempts to

combat the existing political system, no matter what party makes them."

At the same time the authors of the foreword were not fully consistent in their Social-Democratic views and had confused ideas about how to implement the major tasks of the workers' movement. They limited them to the "purely workers' cause of the economic struggle against capital" and deemed it necessary to "renounce the former tasks of carrying out propaganda among the workers, that is, of drawing the workers into the political conspiracies of the intelligentsia," erroneously believing that this "weakened the working class and demoralised it by withdrawing from its midst the more outstanding personalities and turning them into the intellectuals".

This revealed the influence of the immature and backward views current in the workers' movement, above all, among the disconnected craftsmen in the Western regions of the country whose spokesmen were Ya. M. Lyakhovsky and B. A. Kistyakovsky, active collaborators in the translation of Kautsky's pamphlet. Before moving to Kiev, the former participated in the craftsmen's movement in Vilna and brought to Kiev his "Vilna experience" which was later developed in A. Kremer's well-known pamphlet "On Agitation". The latter, after a short-lived espousal of Marxism, turned liberal and became a close associate of P. B. Struve.

The erroneous views of the authors of the foreword to Kautsky's pamphlet did not affect the practical activities of the first Kiev Social-Democratic organisation, because its true leaders, Melnikov and Eidelman, were mature and experienced Marxists by that time. For example, Melnikov, according to Eidelman, thought that "when the Russian publishers wrote in the foreword to the first edition of Kautsky's *Erfurt Programme* that a worker going deep into studying theory was lost for the workers, they were mistaken".

The first publication of the *Erfurt Programme* in Russian put out by the Russian Group was distributed and scrupulously studied by the Social-Democratic study circles and organisations in the 1890s. It is known, for example, that when the police

searched a student's flat in Kharkov in June 1898 "two hand-written notebooks and two sections of Kautsky's *Erfurt Programme* with a foreword written by Russian Social-Democrats" were found.

With the help of that publication the Kiev Social-Democrats sought to consolidate their positions in fighting the liberal Narodniks who, headed by N. K. Mikhailovsky, launched a violent campaign against Marxism and the Russian Social-Democrats in *Russkoye Bogatstvo* journal. Mikhailovsky received wrathful protests against that campaign, among them a letter from the Kiev Marxists signed Southern Provincial. The letter was sharply polemical and biting. For example, it contained the following comment on Mikhailovsky: "Your article is libel, all the more scurrilous since the Marxists are unable to disprove it" because "we have censorship that would not only forbid Marxists to publish a paper but even to utter a word."

Heated debates between the Social-Democrats and Narodniks took place in Kiev at that time. They centered on problems of the future of capitalism in Russia, prospects for the further development of the revolutionary movement, and the role of the working class.

Lenin's *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* was a big help to the Kiev Marxists in their struggle against liberal Narodniks. The book was studied in circles, copied and distributed among advanced workers and representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia. L. S. Fedorchenko, who attended lectures at Kiev University, without having the formal status of student, gave the following explanation to the police in early 1895 when a handwritten copy of a section of Lenin's work was found at his place: "The manuscript written on 34 pages of separate semisheets under the title *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* belongs to me and was copied by me personally in the summer or autumn of 1894, I don't remember exactly, from a typewritten copy I had received from an acquaintance of mine..." Whenever they searched local Social-Democrats, the police always found Lenin's book.

Not all Russian Marxists knew the author of the book at that time but it provided stimulating reading because of its novel interpretation of many problems in social development, and the profound substantiation of the historic mission of the Russian proletariat as the only natural representative of the interests of the entire working and exploited people of Russia and as an advanced revolutionary force in the liberation struggle of the country's peoples against autocracy and capitalism.

Lenin's book dealt a heavy blow at liberal Narodism and offered the young Marxists answers to the problems they were concerned with, including those of the future of capitalism in Russia and the application of Marxism to Russian reality. It gave them a clear-cut idea of the scientific and political foundations of the Social Democratic movement in Russia and the programme and tactic of the Russian Social Democrats.

Debates with Narodniks revealed legal Marxism as another ideological adversary of the revolutionary Social Democrats. By criticising in legal publications the Narodniks and defending the Marxist approach to understanding of Russia's economic development, the legal Marxists popularised certain Marxist principles and conclusions, thus winning over those Marxist young people who were somewhat ideologically immature. Those young people were impressed by Struve's book *Critical Notes on the Question of Russia's Economic Development* and a circle of Struve's followers was set up in Kiev.

Nevertheless, ideologically more mature representatives of the Marxist intelligentsia were already critical about the conclusions drawn in Struve's book and came out against Struvists. Lunacharsky described a "large meeting" with heated debates between Struve's supporters and revolutionary Marxist youth. According to him, the former denied the need to interfere in the workers' struggle against the employers with the aim of lending it a class and political character. The latter, on the contrary, insisted that the Social Democrats "should influence the workers so as to constantly underscore the irreconcilable nature of their class position and to direct their present day

struggle towards seizing political power with the aim of carrying out a social revolution."

Along with studying Marxism, the Russian Social-Democratic Group paid ever more attention to establishing contacts with broad sections of the workers, awakening their class consciousness, and equipping them with political knowledge. "To find a worker and to engulf him in propaganda was the dream of a Social-Democrat at the time," Eidelman wrote, describing the mood of the Marxist youth in Kiev. Different avenues were tried. Some members of the study circles would learn some trade and then find employment as workers at enterprises.

In 1893 the Russian Social-Democratic Group established ties first with craftsmen and then with industrial workers. Workers' study circles were set up to propagandise Social-Democratic ideas, read Marxist and revolutionary-democratic literature and discuss problems of the workers' economic and political situation. In 1894, the Group, which had formerly been a Marxist study circle of theoreticians engaged in propaganda among the students, completely transformed itself into propagandists among the workers.

A workshop organised by Melnikov in his flat in Lukyanovka played a great part in effecting that transformation. Eidelman wrote that it became a school for many workers. "Our pupils brought there their friends... The place was visited by representatives of the intelligentsia from all the Kiev study groups. There some learnt to speak and write in a language comprehensible to the people. Organisational plans were discussed there in a close-knit circle. Newspaper reports were discussed, arguments held on propaganda and agitation and books distributed. Melnikov was the life and soul of the Lukyanovka club."

The workshop was set up in order to train fitters and turners from among craftsmen and the Social-Democratic intelligentsia and to equip them with general theoretical and political knowledge so that they could be employed as workers at enterprises, carry out Social-Democratic activities there and establish contacts with advanced workers. This project was made a reality by Melnikov. A skilled worker himself, he taught metal-work-

ing and lathe-operating to many people and his pupils worked at several Kiev factories maintaining contacts with the Social-Democrats.

The Lukyanovka club, as the members of the movement referred to Melnikov's workshop, was a centre of attraction for all the revolutionary circles in Kiev. The Russian Group was joined by a workers' study group of railwaymen, formerly associated with the nationalistic Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS). When the Polish Socialist Party and the Social-Democracy of Kingdom of Poland (SDPK) emerged in 1894, the single group of Polish socialist youth that existed in Kiev split into two groups. One joined the local PPS, the other sided with the SDPK. The Russian Social-Democratic Group headed by Melnikov and Eidelman and the group of Polish Social-Democrats headed by V. Bogucki opposed the nationalistic tendencies of the PPS members. As a result of their struggle they won over the railwaymen's circle, which was transformed from a narrow, nationalist Polish circle into an internationalist Social-Democratic circle that played a significant part in educating advanced workers in Kiev.

By 1895 the Russian Social-Democratic Group had become a leading organisation of the Kiev workers' movement. It had links with nearly all the factories and big workshops in the city. The police department estimated that the number of "organised worker revolutionaries had reached ... 100 people in Kiev as early as the spring of 1894". The first May Day meeting held in Kiev in 1894 was attended by about 20 workers, whereas in 1895 the May Day meeting was attended by about 100 workers.

Growing contacts with workers resulted in the formation of a leading centre of the movement. It was the Workers' Committee set up in December 1895 on the initiative of Melnikov and Eidelman. To quote the latter, the committee was to "know everything that took place among the city workers and to make expedient use of everything suitable through personal interference. The committee members brought with them information about the life of the workers. Priority was given to the problems of distributing the old and setting up new propaganda workers' study circles, of spreading legal and illegal literature, of

disputes with factory owners, cases of discontent and protest, strikes and other causes for writing leaflets and so on." The Workers' Committee united the Social-Democratic forces of Kiev to carry out systematic propaganda in workers' study circles. Melnikov was one of the most active members and leaders of the committee, while Eidelman represented the Russian Social-Democratic Group in it.

By that time the Russian Social-Democratic Group was joined by new activists who were to play a great role in the further development of Kiev's Social-Democratic movement. In 1895 N. A. Vigdorchik and R. M. Rosenberg, at the time students at Kiev University, joined the group.

Vigdorchik had previously been active in the Nizhny Novgorod Marxist study circle, where Lenin read his paper on V. P. Vorontsov's book *On the Future of Capitalism in Russia* in January 1894. In Kiev Vigdorchik became the "main pen" of the Social-Democratic organisation and wrote several leaflets, articles and pamphlets that were printed illegally. The typesetter, A. D. Polyak, who had been through the school of the early workers' study circles in Minsk and Gomel, was well-versed in Social-Democratic writings, and had experience in organisational and propaganda activities among workers, came to Kiev at that time. He was introduced to Melnikov and Eidelman by Vigdorchik, became an active member of the Russian Social-Democratic Group and its Workers' Committee and organised the underground printing house. It was there that the first leaflets addressed to Kiev workers were printed in early 1896.

The leaflets were written by members of the Russian Social-Democratic Group at the request of the Workers' Committee and on the basis of its materials. The texts were analysed and discussed by the Workers' Committee, then hectographed and distributed among the workers. They came out under the title "A Letter to Comrades", or "A Letter to Kiev Workers". Four leaflets were issued between late January and mid-March, 1896. The first exposed the oppression and abuses of workers in the workshop of the Dnieper Steamship Company. The next leaflet was issued in connection with a successful strike by workers at the Kravets tailoring shop. The third dealt with the

strike at the Lyudmer sewing workshop, and the last focused on the struggle for shorter hours.

The leaflets were primarily aimed at showing the workers the need to unite for a joint struggle against the employers and the importance of workers' solidarity, mutual support and assistance. "Let us remember," one of the leaflets stated, "that the happiness of the workers is in their own hands and their might is in their unity." The Workers' Committee also issued "The Regulations of the Joint Struggle Fund".

Even at that period of their activities, when the mass of the workers was still unconscious of their class goals, the Kiev Social-Democrats used the first case of police interference in the strike at the Lyudmer workshop to make the political significance of their struggle to improve their economic situation clear to the workers and to show that, on the one hand, the factory owners had common interests, and on the other, the police and the government were also united. The leaflet commenting on this event said: "We can learn much of what will be useful in our struggle." The leaflet described in a simple and clear-cut way how and why the police came to take the side of the workers' enemies and how they began to look for those "who instigated the Lyudmer apprentices to revolt". It said in conclusion: "Now we understand full well who they (the police.— *The author.*) support. We know that the police are our enemies, just as our employers are... We have believed so far that we were fighting only against our employers. Now it turns out that the police and the managers come to the employers' help and also want to subjugate us." And it ended with an appeal for workers' unity. "Workers brought together in a union is a force that can fear nothing."

Thus, following the example of the St. Petersburg Social-Democrats, their Kiev associates began passing from propagandising Marxism in study circles to mass agitation among the workers. Just as in St. Petersburg, where at the beginning leaflets, as N. K. Krupskaya wrote, "were usually written on economic problems and topical subjects", the Kiev Social-Democrats followed the same tactics. Using denunciatory materials about the plight of the workers, violations of their

rights by factory owners, and their working conditions, they encouraged the workers to think about the causes of all such practices and those responsible for them; they developed political consciousness among the workers and linked the struggle for economic demands with the political struggle against tsarism. In February 1895 the Kiev Social-Democratic group attended a conference held in the capital by the Social-Democratic groups of St. Petersburg, Moscow and Vilna with Lenin's participation, which discussed the problem of the transition from propaganda to mass agitation.

In their work the Kiev Social-Democrats followed Lenin's instructions and sought to combine economic and political agitation. With this aim in view strike funds, as participants recalled, were used to establish propaganda, agitation and organisational centres for class-conscious workers. New strike funds were formed at meetings of the workers' study circles.

Melnikov paid special attention to the activities of the latter. He often visited their meetings, had talks with workers and read them illegal Marxist publications. "I remember," one of the participants in such meetings recalled, "Melnikov entering the workshop, looking lovingly with his gentle eyes at those assembled there, and sat down on a joiner's bench with a kind smile on his lips. He told us about Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and about their doctrine that revealed the fierce oppression and exploitation of the workers. We were deeply impressed by the first lecture, and his simple manner of explaining things was like a warm ray of sun for our hearts."

In 1896 the Workers' Committee made the first attempt to found a printing press. Melnikov had brought the printer's type from Gomel, but arrests soon afterwards temporarily interfered with the undertaking. On the whole the Kiev Social-Democrats worked in strict conspiracy and for several years managed to escape major exposures and arrests. As their contacts grew, however, their ranks were infiltrated by agents provocateurs. In the spring of 1896 the power plant workers' study circle was routed because one of the plant employees who had taken part in the circle meetings had reported to the authorities. Melnikov and Polyak were among those arrested.

With its two key members arrested, the Workers' Committee stopped its work.

Rabotnik journal, which was published by the Emancipation of Labour group in Geneva on Lenin's initiative, carried an extensive report from Kiev dated June 26, 1896. That report, as it were, summed up the first period of the activities of the Kiev Social-Democrats. It listed all the most important developments in the workers' movement in Kiev, described strikes and disturbances at Kiev enterprises, May Day celebrations, the first four leaflets and the "Regulations of the Resistance Funds" issued "in view of growing strikes in Kiev", arrests and searches among the workers and the great impact produced by all those events on the development of class-consciousness of the workers. "...We can state with pleasure," the report said, "that both our factory workers and craftsmen had of late shown their true worth to the factory owners and the police guarding them either through disturbances and rallies which led to partial concessions on the part of the capitalists or through correctly organised and staunchly held out strikes... Needless to say, they have a tremendous moral influence on the entire Kiev working people."

As in Kiev, Social-Democratic ideas were brought to Ekaterinoslav from outside. In early 1889 P. V. Tochisky, an organiser and leader of one of the early Social-Democratic organisations in St. Petersburg — the Association of St. Petersburg Workmen (1886-1888), was banished from St. Petersburg and came there. By the time of his arrival there had already been self-education circles for students in Ekaterinoslav. Tochisky contacted one of them, known under the name of the Zaslavskys' circle.

At that time, the circle was going through a transitional period in its development from Narodism to Marxism. Besides writings by Narodniks and other revolutionary democrats, the circle held readings of the first volume of Marx's *Capital* and discussions between Marxist youth and Narodniks. It was during that period that P. Tochisky appeared in the circle, greatly influencing its development to embrace Social-Democratic ideas.

At the end of 1889, Ye. G. Munblit, a student banished from Odessa for taking part in a student demonstration, also came to Ekaterinoslav. He, too, joined the Zaslavskys' circle. A mature Social-Democrat, he brought with him publications of the Emancipation of Labour group and encouraged the circle to develop along Social-Democratic lines.

That same year a self-education circle of grammar school students was formed by G. D. Leiteizen (Lindov), who headed it and later on became an active member of the Bolshevik Party. In 1891 V. I. Teitelbaum, a student from Berne University returning to Ekaterinoslav from Switzerland, convinced a group of members of the circle headed by Leiteizen to abandon it and to form a separate Marxist study circle that was to become the first Ekaterinoslav Social-Democratic organisation.

Teitelbaum had brought along a large number of publications by the Emancipation of Labour group and was an active propagandist of its Social-Democratic ideas. He was also connected with the activities of another Ekaterinoslav circle described by M. M. Essen who came to Ekaterinoslav in 1892. It was in that circle that Essen embarked upon her remarkable life as a proletarian revolutionary. "Every night we got together at Teitelbaum's place and read till dawn," Essen recalled. "A coherent world outlook began taking shape out of the chaos of ideas and feelings." She described in detail the persistence and avidity with which the circle members studied the first volume of Marx's *Capital*, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels, the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat* and other Marxist publications.

As they absorbed the fundamentals of Marxism and the practical tasks of the Social-Democrats, the circle members began looking for opportunities to use their knowledge in practice.

In 1893-1894 Leiteizen met M. D. Yefimov, a worker at the Bryansky works, through members of a craftsmen's study circle he had set up, and with his help attracted a group of his young fellow-workers to studies in the circle.

Owing to Leiteizen's and Yefimov's efforts, the town craftsmen's study circle merged with the group of workers of the

Bryansky works in early 1894. This laid the foundation of the first Social-Democratic workers' study circle which played an important role in the development of the revolutionary workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav. Later on Lenin was to meet some of the active worker members of that group in Siberia when he was in exile there.

The workers' study circle formed by Leiteizen and Yefimov grew quickly, expanding its activities and attracting ever new members. Nearly every evening the circle members assembled at Yefimov's place, listening eagerly to their leaders and persistently adding to their knowledge. "...Real heroes are coming to the fore," Lenin pointed out, "from amongst the workers, who, despite their wretched living conditions, despite the stultifying penal servitude of factory labour, possess so much character and will-power that they study, study, study and turn themselves into conscious Social-Democrats..."*

Lenin's conclusion was confirmed by the activities of the first Ekaterinoslav workers' study circle. Its leaders and propagandists were surprised to see the workers' eagerness for knowledge. In a small, low-ceilinged room dimly lit by a small oil lamp, workers avidly listened to the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and the *Erfurt Programme* and commentaries on them... Even after an exhausting working day they were ready to listen, read and study all night.

The arrival of the leaders of the first Moscow Social-Democratic organisations, G. N. Mandelshtam and A. N. Vinokurov, in Ekaterinoslav was of great importance for the circle's further ideological and organisational development. Banished from Moscow to Oryol, Mandelshtam then moved to Ryazan and from there, in search of a better place for his revolutionary work, came to Ekaterinoslav in the summer of 1894. He was an educated revolutionary intellectual with experience of practical work in Marxist study circles. Once in Ekaterinoslav, Mandelshtam came into contact with Leiteizen and joined the activities of the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democratic workers' study circle. That

* V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 280-81.— *Ed.*

same year Vinokurov also arrived in Ekaterinoslav.

With the arrival of Mandelshtam and Vinokurov, who were mature Marxists and experienced Social-Democrats, the circle's activities became more vigorous and better organised. The circle's classes were held in the following way: Leiteizen focused on the workers' movement in Russia and abroad, Vinokurov on problems of political economy, labour protection and natural sciences, and Mandelshtam explained the history of peoples as the history of class struggle and spoke about the establishment of states and forms of state rule. They studied Marx's *Capital*, works by Engels, Bebel and Plekhanov and read Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev.

Classes in theory were closely linked with life. They were usually opened by reports from circle members about the state of affairs at the town's factories and workshops and about cases of arbitrariness on the part of management. Then the class leader would connect those reports with his explanations of the exploiting essence of capitalism and the need for the working class to wage an economic and political struggle. A police report stated that the circle leaders "conducted talks in such a way so as to make workers clearly see the capitalists' unfair attitude towards them and the incomparably better situation of the workers abroad thanks to a different state system".

Thus, advanced worker Social-Democrats were educated and soon engaged in independent revolutionary activities at the enterprises. "After six months of training, members of our circle already could independently carry out agitation among workers," A. Smirnov, a circle member, wrote in his memoirs. A. Vinokurov also stated that when he came into contact with the study circle, he met in it "several educated young workers familiar with the fundamentals of Marxism and devoted to the cause". They carried out agitation among workers at the Bryansky works, spread Social-Democratic publications and explained that "the goal of the circle they belonged to was to overthrow the autocracy and private property".

In early 1895 the circle members set up a workers' fund. A resolution on it stated that the fund was organised to help striking and unemployed workers, as well as those persecuted by

the authorities. That same year a May Day meeting attended by 100 people was held on the initiative of the circle. The speakers called upon the workers to unite in their struggle against the ruling classes, and at the close of the meeting the workers sang revolutionary songs. It was the first May Day meeting in Ekaterinoslav that had paramount importance for the development of class-consciousness and the sense of organisation among Ekaterinoslav workers.

The formation of a leading centre consisting of Vinokurov, Leiteizen and Mandelshtam was a logical conclusion of the growing activities of the Social-Democratic workers' study circle and its expanded contacts. In this way the united workers' circle of the Bryansky works actually turned into an integral Social-Democratic organisation in the town, and the organisation followed the example of St. Petersburg and Moscow in launching economic and political agitation among the workers at large.

The Ekaterinoslav Social-Democratic organisation discussed all the outstanding problems that emerged at factories and in workshops and promptly reacted to them in its leaflets and through verbal agitation. Leaflets were hectographed but, unfortunately, none of them has preserved. Nevertheless, participants in the movement unanimously speak about their great influence. A. Smirnov, for example, wrote: "Our work among the people was usually conducted in the following way: we prepared illegal materials so that we could take them to the works in the morning, coming before the factory hoot. When workers came to the workshops, it could be seen in nearly all the departments how crowds formed and discussed leaflets or illegal books they had picked up." At the same time the network of propaganda study circles and groups also grew, for example, a circle of women-workers was formed.

A. Vinokurov said that already at that stage of the activities of the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democrats "both in propaganda and agitation all minor economic problems were closely linked to politics and to the need to fight tsarism". A police report for 1895-1896 stated that in their talks with workers the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democrats said that "the government was at one

with factory owners and that it was an enemy and a strong one at that", and that in order to defeat that enemy they "had only to unite, to form an organisation cemented by a single will and a single desire to overthrow the hated government and to put in its stead a government that would fulfil the will of the workers and meet the interests of the workers". To attain these goals "the workers had to organise workers' funds and to hold strikes..."

The vigorous activity of the leading centre of the organisation and of the group of advanced workers that rallied around it ensured the numerical growth of the participants in the movement. According to the police documents, the craftsmen's circle founded by Leiteizen consisted of a mere 11 people, whereas the workers' circle at the Bryansky works guided by the Social-Democratic centre, united more than 50 workers by the summer of 1895. "That circle," Vinokurov wrote, "was the first to place the workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav on a large scale encompassing workshops, and it was also the first to fall victim of political persecution. The foundation laid was, however, so stable that no further repressions could suppress the revolutionary workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav..."

Late August 1895 brought exposures, primarily because of insufficient secretiveness among some members of the organisation. Carried away by revolutionary propaganda and lacking any experience in conspiracy, the young workers often operated too openly, without necessary caution and paid no attention to the warnings by their more experienced comrades.

The first exposure took place in June 1895, when Vinokurov and Mandelshtam were arrested. They were experienced conspirators and gave the police no information about the Social-Democratic organisation, which continued operating after their arrest. The police knew nothing about its existence until an agent provocateur who had infiltrated it informed them about it. Wholesale searches and arrests were carried out in the early hours of August 24, 1895. Most of the members of the Social-Democratic organisation found themselves behind the bars, and 43 people were put on trial. Some members of the organisation escaped arrest and remained free, among them some young

workers closely associated with the routed organisation. They came to replace their predecessors and actively participated in the activities the new illegal revolutionary workers' organisation launched in Ekaterinoslav.

In this way the first stage of the Social-Democratic movement in Kiev and Ekaterinoslav was characterised by the pooling and organisation of forces for a further work on a wider scale, and for paving the way to a new stage, that of mass political agitation among the workers.

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE KIEV LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE

In the late 1890s, the Social-Democratic movement in Kiev and Ekaterinoslav entered a new stage of its development. Drawing on the experience and help of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Social-Democratic organisations, the revolutionary Social-Democrats had scored considerable success by that time. Russian Social-Democrats reported to the International Socialist Congress in London in June 1896: "Class-consciousness among the workers is awakening in the south of Russia just as quickly as it is in the north. There is no major industrial centre there either that has not seen strikes or other manifestations of the proletariat's growing discontent in the past two years or so."

This development of the workers' movement in the south of the country was a direct consequence of the versatile activities of the Social-Democratic organisations in major cities and industrial centres of the Ukraine and especially in Kiev and Ekaterinoslav. The two cities' Social-Democrats began to go over from the propaganda of Marxism in the workers' study circles and the ideological and political education of individual workers to mass agitation, proceeding from pressing economic and political problems. Nevertheless, this was, according to Lenin, just "the *first* beginnings of mass agitation."*

* V. I. Lenin, "Plan for an Article '1895 and 1905 (Short Parallel)'", *Collected Works*, Vol. 41, p. 137.— *Ed.*

Reality called for fresh measures to develop mass agitation and the propaganda of socialist ideas and also to improve the very organisation of the movement. It was necessary to work towards greater unity among the Social-Democratic study circles and groups and towards forming city organisations and then, by expanding and consolidating links among them, to unite on a nationwide scale, to form a workers' party and link scientific socialism with the workers' movement.

These were the historic tasks tackled by the revolutionary Social-Democrats in Kiev and Ekaterinoslav in the second half of the 1890's in close co-operation with the revolutionary Marxists of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other centres of the workers' movement.

By the spring of 1896 the first steps in this direction had been taken in Kiev. The transition to new forms of work was accompanied by heated debates with those who advocated old tactics. The Workers' Committee and its representative in the Russian Social-Democratic Group favoured agitation. The group of Polish Social-Democrats which had until then been close to the Russian Group and co-operated with it, opposed the transition to mass agitation. As a result of the different attitudes to the new tactics, friendly co-operation and the relations of "allies" which had developed during the joint opposition to the nationalistic PPS, came to an end.

Some believed that the transition to mass agitation was premature, allegedly because the mass of the workers were not prepared for it and insisted on the old forms of propaganda in study circles, while others rejected the transition to new tactics on considerations of conspiracy, fearing that without first consolidating links and training successors the organisation was bound to be exposed. Still others, though advocating agitation, favoured only economic agitation and resolutely opposed political agitation. These views reflected the incipient opportunistic trend among Russian Social-Democracy, later called Economism.

Led by Yu. D. Melnikov, Kiev's revolutionary Social-Democrats worked against these views and trends and towards applying new tactics. In those days his pithy saying "It is better to

raise the mass of the people one inch than one man to the first floor" became a motto for all advocates of the new revolutionary tactics. They considered unfounded all the arguments of those who favoured conspiracy, and counted them by proving that "the more people are involved in agitation the more elusive the central group is". They deemed it necessary to combine agitation on economic and political problems that were closely interrelated owing to the workers' way of life and situation. Early in 1896, the Russian Social-Democratic Group undertook the publication of the pamphlet *How the Minister Cares for the Workers*, which dealt with the secret instruction of the Minister of Finance Witte to factory inspectors. The pamphlet shows that the Russian Group conducted political agitation, denounced the tsarist government's anti-labour policy and exposed the factory inspectors' role as the servants of autocracy which flirted with the bourgeoisie. The manuscript of the pamphlet was read at the workers' May Day meeting in Kiev in 1896. That same year it was published in Geneva and widely circulated. It was also familiar to and extensively read among St. Petersburg workers.

Work to apply the new tactics was beset with difficulties when Melnikov was arrested in the spring of 1896 and the Workers' Committee ceased operating. From then on, the opponents of the new tactics became more active. The situation was aggravated by the fact that not only the opponents of the new tactics among the local Social-Democrats opposed the Russian Social-Democratic Group, but also the "united forces" of the non-Social-Democratic circles operating in Kiev, including the study circle of the former Narodnaya Volya group headed by I. A. Dyakov and the circle of "worker revolutionaries". The former accused the Kiev Social-Democrats of ignoring political struggle, while the latter sowed distrust among the workers with regard to the Social-Democratic intelligentsia.

This persisted till the autumn of 1896, when, after a certain realignment of forces and the withdrawal from the Russian Social-Democratic Group of V. M. Sapezhko, who opposed the new tactics and joined the Polish Social-Democrats, the Russian

Group again became engaged in vigorous activities. The advocates of mass economic and political agitation transformed the Russian Social-Democratic Group into the *Rabocheye Dyelo* group. By giving their organisation this name, its members seemed to be emphasising their solidarity with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, which was preparing to publish a newspaper under the same name in late 1895. B. L. Eidelman headed the group.

The *Rabocheye Dyelo* group, to quote Eidelman, "organised local activities along new lines of agitation, using leaflets, and formed another Kiev Workers' Committee..." The group began preparing for the publication of a workers' newspaper and set up an editorial board, which did in actual fact become the centre of publishing illegal agitational literature — newspapers, leaflets and pamphlets. The first issue of the newspaper *Vperyod* (Forward) came out on December 8, 1896. "The present situation is favourable and suitable for our oppressors and they do not want any changes made ... while we workers strive forward. This is why our newspaper is called *Vperyod!*," the editors wrote under the headline "Why Do the Workers Need a Newspaper". The first issue was handwritten in block letters and hectographed. Explaining to the workers why the newspaper "was written in blue irregular letters rather than printed", the editors concluded the editorial with: "It is because the books and newspapers telling the workers the truth are not allowed to be put out in the printing houses. So it is better to read the truth written in blue ink than beautifully printed lies."

Eidelman was right to say that the first issue of *Vperyod* was addressed to the mass of the workers "who were hearing an appeal to form a class organisation for the first time". Facts about the life of Kiev factory workers were cited in the newspaper, in raising the questions: "Why is it that the workers lead such a poor life, what is the reason for it? Who is to blame for their plight and who oppresses them?" By giving answers to these questions, the newspaper explained what the workers had to do to improve their situation and described how the workers who had become aware of their situation and class goals, pooled their forces and opposed their oppressors and exploiters. The

newspaper carried a report on the three-week strike staged by St. Petersburg weavers in the summer of 1896, a strike that involved 30,000 workers and "was much talked about all over Russia and abroad, too". Every conscious worker who had already awakened from slumber and began pondering on the events around him "was keen to know about that strike". The newspaper stressed that the authorities had forbidden the publication of news about it, fearing "lest workers in other areas should follow the example of their fellow-workers in St. Petersburg". The newspaper also carried an article about the Hamburg workers' strike and urged that "a lesson should be drawn from that cohesion and that indispensable organisation, without which the workers' struggle to improve their situation is impossible".

The publication of the newspaper *Vperyod* was a major event in the life of the Kiev Social-Democrats. It was widely circulated and made a great impression on the workers. Just three days after the first issue came out, the police found copies of it in the possession of workers at many Kiev enterprises. The newspaper was also known in St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Vilna and Moscow.

February 1897 saw the publication of the second issue of the newspaper, which was typewritten and mimeographed. It showed that the Kiev Social-Democrats were well informed about the workers' movement and the activities of the Social-Democratic organisations in the country's major centres. Apart from the copious material under the heading "Local News", the newspaper had a column "About Russia", which reported on strikes and other events within the workers' movement in Moscow, Orekhovo-Zuyevo and Kovrov Uyezd in Vladimir Gubernia. The report from Moscow described the accomplishments of the workers' movement and the leaflet issued by the Moscow Workers' League in connection with the extensive arrests among the workers and the Social-Democratic intelligentsia. The newspaper summarised this material in the following way: "We wish the Kiev workers to be as courageous in their struggle and fear arrests as little as the Moscow workers."

The editorial "What is Going on in St. Petersburg" occupied

pride of place in the second issue of the newspaper. It dealt with the experience gained in strike action among St. Petersburg workers led by Lenin's League of struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, in which the workers did "much not only for themselves but for the whole of Russia". The article ended with an appeal to follow the example of the St. Petersburg workers: "If workers throughout Russia acted like those in St. Petersburg, if all Russian workers united and joined efforts in fighting against their enemies, we would soon have a better life."

The Rabocheye Dyelo group emerged as a result of heated debates on the problem of going over from propaganda in study circles to agitation among the mass of the workers. It began publishing its own newspaper, printing and distributing agitational leaflets and soon actually became a city Social-Democratic organisation uniting all the major forces of the Kiev Social-Democrats by early 1897.

Of paramount importance was the establishment of close contacts between the Rabocheye Dyelo group and Polish Social Democrats. It has been mentioned previously that during debates on the new tactics the latter came out against going over to mass agitation and became an enemy of the Russian Social-Democratic Group instead of its ally. Soon enough, however, the group of Polish Social-Democrats did, to quote one of its members, very soon "find itself in an impasse". "Dissatisfaction mounted," he pointed out, "which forced the group to revise its tactics and hence to look for a new, close unity with the Rabocheye Dyelo group...." Reality showed that the Rabocheye Dyelo group was following the right course.

The unification of Kiev's Social-Democratic groups into a city organisation, which had in fact taken place, was organisationally sealed immediately after the March 17-18, 1897 Conference in Kiev. This was the first attempt on the part of the Rabocheye Dyelo group to convene a congress of the representatives of the Social-Democratic organisations from the movement's major centres.

In keeping with the resolutions of the March 1897 conference, the Rabocheye Dyelo group and that of Polish Social-Demo-

crats merged to form a single organisation — the Kiev League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. That was a significant stage in the history of Kiev's Social-Democratic movement, and it greatly influenced the development of the workers' movement in other Ukrainian towns and industrial centres. The Kiev League of Struggle had about 30 members, and among its leaders were B. L. Eidelman, N. A. Vigdorchik, and P. L. Tuchapsky.

The Kiev League of Struggle started extensive economic and political agitation among the mass of the workers by regularly releasing leaflets. One of the police reports stated that "beginning with the spring of 1897 copies of appeals to the workers, revolutionary in content and signed by the Kiev League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, were used to be scattered in large numbers in the streets of Kiev, at the entrances of blocks of flats, in railway workshops and in general in the areas inhabited by workers". This started with the publication on April 18 of a "Leaflet For May Day 1897", the first leaflet to be type-set at the still poorly equipped underground printing press.

The leaflet described May Day celebrations in other countries and the significance of that holiday in the workers' struggle to improve their conditions and achieve the unity, cohesion and organisation of their ranks. The authors voiced confidence that May Day would "invigorate and encourage" the Russian workers and give them "fresh strength for further struggle".

The participants said that the May Day leaflet "raised the workers' spirits". It was printed in 900 copies, which was an impressive number for the time, and was widely circulated. It could be seen at nearly all the Kiev factories and workshops and pasted on fences and telegraph poles.

The May Day leaflet was meant to be distributed outside Kiev as well. With this aim in view, some vacant space was left in the leaflet to indicate the town where the given copies were to be distributed. Immediately after the leaflet was issued, part of the print was taken to Kharkov, Kremenchug and Ekaterinoslav. This demonstrated that the Kiev League of Struggle

did not intend to limit its activities to Kiev, but was determined to influence and promote the development of the Social-Democratic movement in other towns and industrial centres as far as possible.

After the "Leflet for May Day 1897" was issued, the Kiev League of Struggle began regularly putting out its leaflets. All in all, about 30 leaflets in several thousands of copies were issued from April 18 to the end of 1897. All the pressing economic and political problems facing the workers were reflected in them.

The leaflets pointed out the extremely long working hours, the absence of labour protection measures, the employers' arbitrariness in paying wages and levying fines, and the rude and inhumane treatment of the workers by the employers and foremen. Every fact and event of factory life was used to develop class consciousness among the workers and to make them aware of their vital interests.

The workers were resolutely set tasks of political struggle. "Apart from opposing the employers, apart from the economic struggle, the workers have to become engaged in opposing the government — in political struggle," a "Letter to All Kiev Workers" said on November 26, 1897. The most important events concerning the Russian proletariat's social and political life found reflection in leaflets issued by the Kiev League of Struggle. They said that not only in Kiev, but also in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Yaroslavl, Odessa and Białystok — everywhere the authorities and the government were hurrying to help the factory owners and this is why only through a combined effort, whereby the struggle against exploitation, oppression and lawlessness is "unanimously joined by hundreds of thousands and millions of workers living in Russia, will the destiny of the government itself be decided".

September 1897 saw the release of a "Letter to All Kiev Workers on the New Law" which explained the June 2, 1897, law limiting working hours at factories, the law adopted due to the St. Petersburg workers' strike action, and on December 19 the League addressed a new letter to Kiev workers in connection with the tsarist government's massacre of workers in

Dąbrowa, Lodz, and Yaroslavl. The letter said that the government was trying in vain to extinguish the fire of the workers' indignation by their blood and to silence with bullets the appeal to fight oppression and the acts of violence perpetrated against them. The tsarist government "will not escape the stern judgement by the working and oppressed people. The better the workers understand the need for joint struggle against the owners and the government, the quicker the hour of that judgement will come..."

The agitational activities carried out by the League of Struggle greatly influenced the development of the workers' movement in Kiev. By educating the workers and awakening their class consciousness, it contributed to drawing ever wider sections of the workers into an active and organised struggle to improve their situation. Through strikes and sometimes merely by threatening to stage them, in some cases Kiev workers succeeded in wringing concessions out of the employers — some were forced to cut working hours, others to increase wages or to reduce fines levied unfairly, and so on. "All these occurrences," the leaflet pointed out, "show that, following the example of St. Petersburg, Moscow and cities abroad, Kiev workers, too, come out in defence of their rights against the capitalists. The number of workers who are aware of the need to combine their efforts in their struggle against the enemy, the number of conscious workers, is growing with every passing day."

Mass agitation with the help of printed matter stimulated the workers' thirst for knowledge and political education. Participants in the events said that ever since the first leaflets appeared "workers had increasingly begun to join the study circles and ask for illegal literature".

The Kiev League of Struggle did a great deal to acquire illegal literature. With this aim in view some of its members made special trips, in particular to Vilna, which was a major recipient of illegal literature from abroad. The illegal library of the League of Struggle found by the police had 1,794 copies of books, pamphlets, and leaflets. The incomplete list of this literature compiled by the police officials included 214 different illegal

publications. Works by Marx and Engels (the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Civil War in France*, *The Development of Scientific Socialism*, Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, and others), by Lenin (the pamphlet *Explanation of the Law on Fines Imposed on Factory Workers*, handwritten pages from *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*), by Plekhanov (*Russian Workers in the Revolutionary Movement*, *A New Crusade Against Russian Social-Democracy*, and *All-Russia Ruin*), and also leaflets of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, the St. Petersburg Workers' Leaflet No. 2 and so on, featured prominently among the literature the League of Struggle had at its disposal. This impressive amount of Marxist literature provided a sound basis for the propaganda of Social-Democratic ideas among the workers. Propagandists read these works in study circles and gave them to most progressive-minded workers for independent reading.

The workers' study circles aimed at training Social-Democratic agitators, propagandists and organisers of the workers' movement and successfully accomplished this task. From its worker activists the Kiev League of Struggle trained a representative group of able organisers and agitators. It is noteworthy that out of the 140 people brought to court in connection with the Kiev League of Struggle case 77 were workers.

Similar to its predecessors — The Russian Social-Democratic Group and the Rabocheye Dyelo group — the Kiev League of Struggle was an internationalist organisation as far as its composition and ideological and political tendencies were concerned. Social-Democrats of Ukrainian, Russian, Jewish and Polish descent and of other nationalities closely collaborated in it. Relying on the Marxist principles of proletarian internationalism, the Kiev Social-Democrats exposed the chauvinistic policy of tsarism in their publications and resolutely opposed any manifestation of nationalism.

They put into effect the resolution adopted together with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, and successfully published the *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers' Newspaper), a nation-

al newspaper. The publication of this newspaper and the active participation in preparing a congress of the Social-Democratic organisations, as it were, crowned the activities of the Kiev League of Struggle. While implementing these tasks, Kiev Social-Democrats expanded their links with Social-Democratic organisations in other centres of the workers' movement. They maintained especially close and lively relations with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle.

The Kiev League of Struggle helped Social-Democratic organisations in Ekaterinoslav, Odessa, Nikolayev and Kharkov. Some of the members of the Kiev organisation actively promoted the development of the Social-Democratic movement in these towns.

A. D. Polyak had an important part to play in developing relations between the Kiev League of Struggle and other Social-Democratic organisations and was indefatigable in this respect. Whenever he was free of his major work of printing and putting out illegal literature, he visited different towns and actively participated in the work of local Social-Democratic organisations. His associates called him the Flying Dutchman. The police described him as "one of the more active" members of the Kiev League of Struggle, "who constantly travelled between Odessa, Kiev and Ekaterinoslav".

The activities of the Kiev League of Struggle acquired a new scope beginning with early 1898. The third issue of the newspaper *Vperyod* came out in January and continued advocating the policy of mounting mass political agitation. Its editorial dealt with the law on shortening working hours passed by the tsarist authorities following the St. Petersburg workers' strike action. The newspaper viewed the law, despite its limitations, as a great victory for the workers' movement. "When they muster their forces," the newspaper pointed out, "the workers will finally do away with a government that oppresses and deceives them and will secure for themselves the right to participate in passing laws and running the country. Then they will easily achieve the legalisation of the eight-hour day."

The newspaper summarised the results of the development of the workers' movement in Kiev in 1897 and stated that over

the past year "a spark of consciousness had been thrown into the mass of the people", and that the workers had realised how to fight their oppressors and "were taking the cause into their own hands".

In view of growing police surveillance, the leadership of the Kiev League of Struggle deemed it necessary for some of its active members to leave Kiev. In the second half of February they began departing to different regions of the country, but this failed to save the organisation from exposure. In the early hours of March 12, 1898, wholesale searches and arrests were made in 27 towns in European Russia, including Kiev. Under the Kiev League of Struggle case 142 were brought to trial.

Nevertheless, the Social-Democratic movement had been fairly well developed by that time and mass arrests only weakened it for a time. Those members of the Kiev League of Struggle who escaped arrests continued their activities, guided by S. M. Uritsky. Soon after the March arrests, the Kiev Social-Democrats released a leaflet in which they declared that the government "was profoundly mistaken: it will not be able to stop the workers' movement by arrests, searches, bayonets, rifles, prisons and penal servitude". The unending daily struggle of the workers in Russia, the leaflet emphasised, demonstrated their growing class consciousness.

In April the League of Struggle issued a May Day leaflet calling upon the workers to fight tsarism and capitalism. One of the police reports said that, despite arrests and the routing of the Kiev League of Struggle, "revolutionary propaganda among Kiev workers did not stop. Leaflets calling for opposition to the capitalists and the government were again distributed in growing numbers among the local workers".

Beginning with the second half of 1898 the Kiev League of Struggle, now transformed into a Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, temporarily fell under the sway of the opportunistic trend of Economism. Nevertheless, the revolutionary Social-Democratic ideas that had been spread in Kiev by the League of Struggle and its predecessors were later furthered by the activities of the Leninist-*Iskra* organisation, which was formed there in the early 20th century.

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE EKATERINOSLAV LEAGUE OF STRUGGLE

While the Kiev League of Struggle was mounting its activities, the Social-Democratic movement in Ekaterinoslav was resuming its activities after the summer 1895 police raids and further developed them. I. Kh. Lalayants, a professional revolutionary and Lenin's comrade-in-arms, came there in late 1895. Lenin characterised him in the following way: "I knew *Lalayants* from the 1890s on as a Marxist and then a Bolshevik. He is undoubtedly a loyal revolutionary...."* After he had served a prison sentence in the St. Petersburg Kresty, he was deported to Penza under open police surveillance in May 1895 and soon decided to move to Ekaterinoslav to continue his Social-Democratic activities there.

By that time, he had received a letter from Moscow from Lenin who had recently returned from abroad. Lalayants availed himself of the opportunity and secretly left for Moscow to consult with Lenin about his intention to move to Ekaterinoslav. "Lenin," he wrote, "enthusiastically welcomed my decision to settle in Ekaterinoslav." He informed Lalayants about the activities of the Social-Democratic organisation existing there and its leaders and provided him with a letter of recommendation to one of the officials on the Ekaterinoslav railway line board, to help him find a job in a new, strange city. Lenin also supplied Lalayants with the illegal literature he had brought from abroad.

By the time he came to Ekaterinoslav, Lalayants was already a mature Marxist who had had a fairly sound Marxist schooling under Lenin's guidance way back in Samara and had considerable experience in revolutionary work. This enabled him to start organising the Social-Democratic activities in Ekaterinoslav fairly quickly. The information about the Ekaterinoslav underground organisation he had received from Lenin helped Lalayants to reveal contacts existing between the impriso-

* V. I. Lenin, "To J. V. Stalin. October 20, 1921", *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 348.— *Ed.*

ned Social-Democrats and the Ekaterinoslav workers who sympathised with them and were still free. Soon after his arrival he managed to meet I. Mazanov, a young worker at the Bryansky works who maintained contact with his elder brother who was in prison. He supplied information about the people who had worked in the Social-Democratic underground organisation or sympathised with it. "Little by little," Lalayants recalled, "here and there, at factories and railway workshops people were met and contacts re-established."

By the summer of 1896 a Social-Democratic organisation called the Central Group had already taken shape in Ekaterinoslav and had begun functioning under the guidance of Lalayants. Gradually, advanced workers and representatives of the revolutionary intelligentsia rallied round it and propaganda circles formed at enterprises, among artisans and students.

The workers' circle at the railway workshops made a particular mark among the Ekaterinoslav study circles of that period. Worker Social-Democrat K. A. Dubovets-Dubovik was its organiser and leader. Banished in 1895 from Rostov-on-Don for revolutionary activities, he came to Ekaterinoslav and found employment as a metal-worker at the railway workshops. As soon as he found his bearings and got to know his fellow-workers, Dubovets-Dubovik engaged in Social-Democratic propaganda in their midst and then formed a circle out of them. Later on the circle members wrote in their memoirs that their leader was a "devoted revolutionary" who "cleverly and quickly won the workers' affection". The circle met once a week, discussed the workers' movement and read illegal literature. The more active and experienced circle members worked independently among the workers and distributed illegal literature among them. One of them wrote: "The workers showed great interest in reading that sort of literature. They were looking for us, and we cautiously engaged in these difficult and dangerous activities."

The Central Group established contacts with artisans, who were subjected to even worse exploitation than the industrial workers. The Social-Democrats succeeded in staging several strikes among workers employed at artisan workshops. "As these

strikes were successful, they in themselves produced an invigorating and stimulating effect on the others," Lalayants wrote.

A new stage in the development of the Social-Democratic workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav that culminated in the formation of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle had to do with I. V. Babushkin, a St. Petersburg worker and Lenin's disciple and associate who had come to the city. "Dozens and hundreds of workers (like the late Babushkin in St. Petersburg)," Lenin wrote, "not only attended lectures at study circles but as early as 1894-95 *themselves carried on agitation*, and then founded workers' organisations in other cities (the Ekaterinoslav organisations founded by Babushkin when he was banished from St. Petersburg...)."*

After staying for 13 months in detention in connection with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle case, Babushkin was sentenced to deportation from the capital under open police surveillance. He decided to settle in Ekaterinoslav, which attracted his attention as a major industrial and workers' centre offering extensive opportunities for further revolutionary activities. Babushkin arrived there in late February 1897 and found a job at the Bryansky works in late May.

Once he found his bearings in his new surroundings, Babushkin began looking for the "old forces of the organisation that had existed" and for associates in general. He was especially happy to meet the workers N. Ye. Merkulov and I. I. Yakovlev, his comrades in the St. Petersburg League of Struggle and Lenin's disciples. They were deported to Ekaterinoslav almost at the same time as Babushkin. "When I met my old friends and like-minded people," Babushkin recalled, "I began calling on them frequently, inviting them to visit me as well and giving them books I had brought along. Life became livelier then." He also made contacts with a number of St. Petersburg workers who had been deported to Ekaterinoslav at different times. As a result, he managed to form a close-knit group of former St. Petersburg workers who had some experi-

* V. I. Lenin, "How Vera Zasulich Demolishes Liquidationism", *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 394.— *Ed.*

ence in revolutionary activities. Relying on it, he continued establishing ever new links, including those with local workers and representatives of the Social-Democratic intelligentsia who were either members of the I. Lalayants' Central Group or affiliated to it.

By the autumn of 1897 a factory study group of Social-Democratic workers had formed under Babushkin's guidance. In a short period it set up several workers' study circles at the Bryansky and other factories and also in railway workshops.

The Central Group led by Lalayants had become considerably stronger by that time, replenished by new forces. It united for the most part the Marxist intelligentsia and provided propagandists for the workers' study circles in the city.

Strikes carried out by St. Petersburg workers in the summer of 1896 and in January 1897 greatly influenced the workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav. "Everybody was impressed by the grand scale of those strikes ... the organisation and cohesion of the strikers and the discipline that reigned among them," Lalayants pointed out. News of the St. Petersburg strikes came to the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democratic underground through different channels brought by participants in strike action themselves banished to Ekaterinoslav and described in the leaflets of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle that reached the city and in local illegal publications by the Social-Democrats.

The St. Petersburg strike action showed the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democrats the wealth of experience accumulated by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle and the outstanding part Lenin had to play in developing the revolutionary workers' movement in Russia. It has already been mentioned that quite a few active participants in the St. Petersburg workers' movement found themselves in Ekaterinoslav in the second half of the 1890s. Some of them knew Lenin fairly well, had met him and heard him speak at workers' study circles. Lalayants and Babushkin, Lenin's closest associates, described Lenin to their fellow-workers in the Ekaterinoslav underground as an outstanding Marxist and revolutionary and kept them well informed about the St. Petersburg events.

The development of the workers' movement in St. Peters-

burg and the rich and highly instructive experience gained by Lenin's League of Struggle greatly assisted the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democrats and encouraged them to look for new forms of work. They became increasingly aware of the need to undertake large-scale agitation among the mass of the workers by issuing and distributing agitational leaflets. This was, however, obstructed not only by the opposition of individual Social-Democrats from among the artisans but particularly by scattered forces and the lack of a single leading centre.

It is only natural that the desire to overcome the existing insularity brought all the study groups that formerly operated independently to take advantage of the close relations that had developed among the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democrats and to merge in December 1897 into a single organisation which, following the example of St. Petersburg and Kiev, adopted the name of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

The main core of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle was formed of I. V. Babushkin, I. Kh. Lalayants, P. I. Damsky, K. A. Petrusevich, M. V. Orlov, P. I. Lalayants (Kulyabko), G. I. Petrovsky, and others. The League consisted of two sections, the factory section headed by Babushkin and the town section headed by Lalayants, each of whom represented his own section in the other.

The formation of the League of Struggle became a turning point in the development of the Social-Democratic workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav. From the early days of its existence the League of Struggle launched large-scale agitation among the workers by regularly issuing and distributing agitational leaflets which were, to quote Babushkin, "to show and tell the workers at large about their hard life and instil in their cowed heads a desire for revolution".

The early leaflets were issued in December 1897 and produced a tremendous impression on the workers. The leaders of the League of Struggle were inspired by their initial success and began preparing new leaflets. Following the St. Petersburg example, they also decided to write leaflets addressed to workers at individual enterprises, besides the general ones aimed at Eka-

terinoslav workers at large. The active members of the League of Struggle began accumulating specific material about the working and living conditions at a particular factory or workshop and about cases of arbitrariness and abuses on the part of employers. "About a month after the early leaflets were issued," Babushkin recalled, "they were prepared for particular factories, a special leaflet for each plant... All in all, there were about eight different leaflets, and each focussed on sundry abuses and merciless deception of the workers at the factories it was intended for."

The keynote of every leaflet was an appeal for the workers' unity and cohesion. "The workers' entire strength lies in their unity," stated the leaflets addressed to the workers of the Handtke and Kamienski factories. "When united, the workers are a formidable force the managers have to reckon with," said a leaflet addressed to the Bryansky factory workers.

During the initial period of mass agitation, leaflets issued by the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle did for the most part contain demands for better working and living conditions for the workers and appeals to take organised strike action, to see vital economic needs satisfied. It should be taken into consideration that, as a result of the rapid development of large-scale industry and the great demand for labour, Ekaterinoslav was flooded with backward ruined peasants, craftsmen and other labourers who offered their labour. Under the circumstances, the tactics of mass agitation on the basis of the workers' daily needs employed by the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle was indispensable. That was the only possible way of awakening class consciousness in the ignorant and downtrodden mass of the workers and of explaining to them the need for the organised and joint struggle of all the workers for their emancipation from oppression, exploitation and lawlessness. "Once the workers had read the naked truth in the leaflet and clearly seen the correctness of the precepts, they were filled with a desire to put an end to at least some of the evils. In other words, the stagnant quagmire began to ripple so that great disturbances were to be expected." This is how Babushkin described the effect of the early agitational leaflets of the Ekaterinoslav League of

Struggle. But even during that period, citing the examples of the struggle waged by workers in St. Petersburg and other cities, the Ekaterinoslav Social-Democrats sought to show the workers in some of their leaflets that in their arbitrariness the employers rely on the support of the government.

The two sections of the League of Struggle had strictly delineated functions and were closely interrelated. The town section headed by Lalayants supplied the factory section with literature, provided it with propagandists to conduct studies in workers' circles and wrote agitational leaflets. The factory section headed by Babushkin expanded links with workers at the factories and workshops, formed workers' study circles, guided their activities, accumulated material about arbitrariness and abuses on the part of the employers and so on. Babushkin spoke with great satisfaction of the well-co-ordinated work and correct relations that had developed in the organisation between its town (intelligentsia) and factory (workers') sections. "To give credit where credit is due," he wrote, "it should be said that all that time the intelligentsia did hardly anything on its own, without previously consulting us, this was why we enjoyed such success in the new undertaking, for there were hardly any disagreements between us throughout the period...."

The League of Struggle awakened in the workers a sense of class consciousness, and they undertook organised action in defence of their rights. There was an outburst of strikes at many enterprises. The May 1898 strike at the French-Russian carriage works in Nizhnedneprovsk was staged with particular tenacity. The workers succeeded in having part of their demands met, in particular in cutting Saturday work to eight hours. The strike entailed police interference, searches and the arrests of its organisers. This interference by the police authorities gradually showed the workers that their economic struggle against the employers had to do with the entire political system existing in the country and taught them to understand the political situation and political needs of the working class.

Summing up the activities of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle, Babushkin wrote: "Our work vigorously progressed and began taking root far and wide." Lalayants also pointed out

that "along and in connection with the gradually growing influence upon the mass of the people, the importance of the Ekaterinoslav organisation in general was also growing. There was talk about Ekaterinoslav in some other places as well. Active revolutionaries persecuted and banished from other cities sought to go to Ekaterinoslav".

Like the Kiev organisation, the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle organised its entire activities on the principle of proletarian internationalism. Social-Democrats of different nationalities jointly worked in it and successfully overcame tendencies towards national narrow-mindedness, which was manifest among some sections of the Polish and Jewish workers. In their leaflets they exposed the chauvinistic policy of Russian tsarism and explained to the workers: "Every proletarian worker, be he a Jew, a Russian, a Pole, a German or a Frenchman, is our brother... Every capitalist employer, be he a Russian, a German, a Pole or a Jew, is our enemy." Besides demanding political freedoms and the right to leagues, assembly and strikes, the leaflets also demanded "equality for all nationalities".

In March 1898 new arrests took place, considerably weakening the organisation. They did not spread to the main core of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle, however, especially its factory section. "None of the workers was arrested and they headed the further activities of the League of Struggle that was soon reorganised into a committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP).

Nevertheless, the March arrests and the subsequent forced departure from Ekaterinoslav of I. Kh. Lalayants and P. I. Kulyabko complicated the activities of the League of Struggle. Describing the situation in the organisation in the early spring of 1898, Babushkin wrote: "We have been orphaned... We have lost several representatives of the intelligentsia in whom we formerly found our inspiration." Those losses were especially felt in conducting mass agitation, preparing and issuing leaflets and also in the activities of the workers' study circles. The leaders of the factory section of the League of Struggle had to undertake the most of the activities and to organise an illegal library on their own.

Soon enough the ranks of the organisation were reinforced with newcomers. Among them were outstanding revolutionaries, including, for example, P. A. Morozov, a St. Petersburg worker and Babushkin's friend and associate in the revolutionary activities in St. Petersburg who had come to Ekaterinoslav after serving a term of exile, and M. G. Tskhakaya also banished there for revolutionary activities in Transcaucasia. "We have succeeded in attracting two entirely new people to our activities," Babushkin mentioned, "thereby forming a fairly close-knit group of people who set themselves the task of guiding the entire movement in the city of Ekaterinoslav."

The group of worker activists on which the League of Struggle relied in their activities grew considerably as a result. For example, from the outset a mere three people or so took part in distributing leaflets, while by the winter of 1898-1899 the number of workers distributing leaflets reached at least twenty to thirty. "In the winter of 1898-1899 all the districts of Ekaterinoslav were seething with revolutionary propaganda and agitation. There were our people at all the factories," Babushkin recalled. The workers' mood noticeably changed, and their class consciousness grew.

The organisational, propaganda and agitational activities of the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle laid the foundations for the mass workers' movement in Ekaterinoslav and the sound groundwork for its further development on the basis of Lenin's ideas.

* * *

The activities of the Kiev and Ekaterinoslav Leagues of Struggle made history in the initial period of the proletarian emancipation movement in Russia and in effecting the historic transition from propaganda in narrow study circles to mass agitation and to fusing scientific socialism with the working-class movement.

These were the early Social-Democratic organisations in the Ukraine which drew on the experience and support of the revolutionary Marxists in St. Petersburg and Moscow, carried out

large-scale agitation and propaganda among the mass of the workers, adding proletarian organisation and class consciousness to their spontaneous struggle against capitalism and tsarist autocracy. They had a beneficial influence on the development of the Social-Democratic workers' movement in other towns and industrial regions of the Ukraine. Professional revolutionaries of Lenin's type were trained by them and greatly contributed to the development of the revolutionary workers' movement and to the formation of Lenin's Party.

Chapter Five

FROM THE LEAGUES OF STRUGGLE TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIALIST-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

Both objective and subjective prerequisites for the establishment of a Marxist Party of the working class had in the main taken shape in Russia by the mid-1890s. On the one hand, the mass workers' movement had been gaining in strength and, on the other, Marxist ideas had become widespread and had decisively overpowered the Narodnik ideology, winning over progressively-minded workers. It was the time when, to quote Lenin, the spontaneous popular movement within the working class and the movement of social thought in direction of the theory of Marx and Engels, the theory of Social-Democracy, converged and began merging to form a single whole.* The Russian revolutionary movement concluded its transition "from peasant and conspiratorial socialism to working-class socialism".**

The formation of the Leagues of Struggle and the emergence of the mass workers' movement was a qualitatively new stage in the history of the liberation movement in Russia. The period of the "embryonic development" of Russian Social-Democracy was definitely a thing of the past. In the course of large-scale strike action by the workers of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Ekaterinoslav, and other cities, it cast away the strait jacket of the study circle period, became closely connected with the workers' movement in practice and ceased to be merely an ideological movement. Social-Democracy became a political party which had the support of the mass workers' movement. In the mid-1890s the Social-Democrats throughout Russia arrived at the idea that the disconnected forces must be

* V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 260.— *Ed.*

** *Ibid.*— *Ed.*

united, centralised and brought together into a single party.

The idea of forming a Marxist party in Russia was most completely substantiated by Lenin. That was the main goal to which all his theoretical and practical activities in St. Petersburg were subordinated. He summarised the enormous experience accumulated by the Russian and international workers' movement, urged that all the forces of the revolutionary Social-Democrats and advanced workers should be united into a single political organisation, worked out the programme and policy of the future party and charted ways of forming it.

He suggested that the future party should be built to the model of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. Characterising the activities of the League as a political leader of the fighting workers, Lenin wrote: "Can it be denied that an organisation like this, if it united, at least, the biggest centres of the working-class movement in Russia (the St. Petersburg, Moscow-Vladimir, and the southern areas, and also the most important towns like Odessa, Kiev, Saratov, etc.), if it had a revolutionary organ at its disposal and enjoyed as much prestige among the Russian workers generally as the League of Struggle does among the St. Petersburg workers — can it be denied that such an organisation would be a tremendous political factor in contemporary Russia, a factor that the government would have to reckon with in its entire home and foreign policy? ...Such an organisation would at one and the same time be a workers' party organisation adapted to our conditions, and a powerful revolutionary party directed against the autocracy."*

Lenin concluded his pamphlet "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats" with a passionate appeal not to lose precious time and to direct all the forces to the implementation of the main task facing the revolutionary Marxists, that of uniting the workers' study circles and the Social-Democratic groups scat-

* V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 341-42.— *Ed.*

tered throughout Russia into a single proletarian party. Together with the book *What the "Friends of the People" Are...* and other works by Lenin, this pamphlet was widely known among the country's Social-Democrats and stimulated their work towards setting up a party.

THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT GAINS SCOPE IN RUSSIA

The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class formed by Lenin provided a powerful impetus to the development of the Social-Democratic workers' movement throughout the country. Following the St. Petersburg example, Leagues of Struggle were formed in major industrial centres, including Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Ekaterinoslav, and Kiev. Moreover, in the second half of the 1890s Marxist study circles and groups existed in more than 80 towns and workers' settlements. Almost all of them were to some extent under the influence of Lenin's League which was the incipient proletarian party of a new type. By expanding its links with the mass of the people, it became a political and organisational centre of the Marxist Social-Democratic movement in Russia.

The leaders of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle were connected in various ways with their associates in different regions of the country, assisted them and enriched them with their experience. Lenin did a great deal in this respect. He personally maintained contacts with Marxists in Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Vladimir, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Orekhovo-Zuyevo, and other towns.

Following Lenin's example and on his request, many members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle established contacts with the Social-Democrats in different cities: for example, the brothers Anatoly and Vassily Vaneyev, the sisters Zinaida and Sofya Nevzorova, and Mikhail Silvin with the Nizhny Novgorod Marxists; Pyotr Zaporozhets with the Social-Democrats in Kiev, Poltava and Ekaterinoslav; Sofya Nevzorova with Iva-

novo-Voznesensk and Vladimir Social-Democrats, and A. A. Ganshin with Moscow's. Members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle also made regular visits to other towns and cities. N. K. Krupskaya visited Poltava, M. A. Silvin, Ivanovo-Voznesensk and Moscow, G. M. Fisher, Narva, P. K. Zaporozhets, Ekaterinoslav, and A. M. Malchenko, Moscow.

All in all, they had links with more than 30 Social-Democratic study circles and groups in other cities, including Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Nizhny Novgorod, Vilna, Yaroslavl, Vladimir, Tver, Tula, Oryol, Samara, and Saratov. The St. Petersburg League of Struggle became the recognised centre of Russian Social-Democracy and influenced the nationwide mustering of the forces of the Social-Democrats, who consolidated their relations with the mass of the people.

The Social-Democratic workers' movement was developing tempestuously, not only in the central regions of the country but in the south, too. There, in Ekaterinoslav, Rostov-on-Don and Krivoi Rog regions, new mines, pits and metal works were put into operation and large-scale capitalist industry was feverishly being built up. The speedy numerical growth of the proletariat accompanied by stepped up exploitation provided favourable conditions for Social-Democratic activities. In 1895, under the influence of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, Rostov's Social-Democratic study circles united and formed a leading Social-Democratic centre.

The Transcaucasian Social-Democrats were also well-informed about the activities of Lenin's League of Struggle. Its individual publications were disseminated among Transcaucasian Marxist study circles. Georgian Social-Democrats knew Lenin's works, *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*, *The Economic Essence of Narodism and its Criticism in Mr. Struve's Book*, and others. Some Marxist study circles in Georgia regarded themselves as local branches of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. For example, the Rules of the Batumi workers' Marxist study circle envisaged the allocation of part of the money from the workers' fund to the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Local police authorities

reported to the central police department that, in their opinion, the activities of the Social-Democrats in Transcaucasia were united by a single centre in St. Petersburg and that the experience of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle was being widely used in Georgia, too.

The St. Petersburg League of Struggle also exercised its influence in the Urals. Considerable success was scored by the Social-Democrats in the western and north-western areas of Russia. Way back in 1893 the Social-Democratic Party of Poland was formed. It established close relations with workers in Warsaw, Lodz, Białystok, Dąbrowa and other cities and guided the Polish proletariat's strike action and May Day activities. The Polish Social-Democrats sought to maintain brotherly unity with the Russian workers' movement. For example, in the 1897 May Day leaflet they wrote about the community of interests of the Polish, Lithuanian and Russian proletariat. "Throughout the tsarist empire," it said, "the idea of the proletariat has found a joyful response and brother has found brother."

In the mid-1890s the early Marxist study circles appeared at Latvian enterprises. The St. Petersburg Marxists maintained contacts with their associates in Latvia through students in the capital who took part in the revolutionary movement. Lenin's League of Struggle supplied the Latvian Social-Democrats with literature and shared its experience in work. Publications by St. Petersburg Marxists, including Lenin's works, leaflets and other documents of the League of Struggle, were distributed among the Riga and Libawa workers attending Marxist study circles.

The influence of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle was also felt in Lithuania and Byelorussia. Its illegal publications, among them Lenin's works, were disseminated among workers in Vilna, Minsk, Vitebsk, Smorgon, Pinsk, and elsewhere. They regarded the selfless activities of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle to be for them "the best example of conscious struggle for the interests of the working class".

Vilna, a major trade and cultural centre in the north-western region, played an important part in the Lithuanian Social-

Democratic movement. A Lithuanian Social-Democratic study group headed by A. Domašavičius and A. Moravsky was formed there in the first half of the 1890s. In 1895, in preparation for a congress of the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party, they worked out its programme, which set forth separatist demands with regard to the Russian revolutionary movement under the influence of the nationalistically-minded PPS. However, consistent Marxists within the Lithuanian revolutionary movement rejected the separatist course. As a result of the acute struggle around the draft programme, the Lithuanian Social-Democrats split and two independent organisations — the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party (LSDP) and the Workers' Union of Lithuania headed by S. S. Trusevich and M. Yu. Kozlovsky were formed in 1896. Unlike the LSDP, the Workers' League adhered to proletarian internationalism. Together with the revolutionary wing of the Lithuanian Social-Democrats headed by F. E. Dzerzhinsky, the League advocated the united action of the Lithuanian and Russian proletariat. "Fighting together with workers throughout Russia," its programme said, "we shall gain the constitution we need which will mark a stage on the road towards socialism."

In the early 1890s, a Jewish Social-Democratic group led by A. Kremer took shape in Vilna. It formed workers' study circles, trained propagandists for them and established contacts with the Social-Democrats in other towns and Russian Marxists in exile. During the early years of its existence the Vilna group professed internationalist views. The group members propagandised Marxism among Jewish, Lithuanian and Polish workers; Jewish workers studied Russian in its circles to be able to read the literature published in Russian and to take part in the all-Russia workers' movement.

Later on, however, separatist tendencies and trends towards an organisationally independent Jewish workers' movement became manifest among Jewish Social-Democrats. Some of the representatives of the movement, including Yu. Martov, who was at that time in Vilna under police surveillance, began insisting on the need for a separate Jewish workers' organisation in view of the allegedly specific interests of the Jewish

proletariat. These nationalistic sentiments were only budding, but under the influence of the petty-bourgeois environment of the Jewish workers' movement they were increasingly taking root.

In September 1897, shortly before the First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was held, Vilna hosted a congress of representatives of the Jewish Social-Democrats of Lithuania, Poland and Byelorussia. It was attended by eleven delegates from Vilna, Warsaw, Minsk, Białystok, and Vitebsk and by the workers' group that published the illegal newspaper *Arbeiter Stimme* (The Voice of the Workers).

The congress united the Jewish Social-Democratic groups into the nationalist Social-Democratic organisation — the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland and Russia (the Bund).

The congress' resolution on the attitude towards the future workers' party in Russia emphasised that the Bund joined it "as an autonomous organisation independent only as far as questions affecting the Jewish proletariat are concerned". In this way the Bund officially sealed its special, autonomous position in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, which was fraught with the danger of separatism and of divorcing the Jewish workers' movement from the all-Russia movement.

The Bund primarily united workers in small-scale industry, artisans and other semi-proletarian elements. As distinct from other Social-Democratic organisations, it was built up on a nationality rather than a territorial principle. Its organisational and political platform reflected the views of the backward semi-proletarian population — craftsmen, artisans and the small town petty bourgeoisie. The leaders of Jewish Social-Democracy sought to adjust their organisation and tactics to the demands of small producers, artisans and urban poor. It is common knowledge that these demands did not go beyond the improved material situation of the working people under the existing bourgeois-landowners' system and the defence of "specific", that is, the national rights of the Jewish population. The idea of the revolutionary overthrow of tsarism and capitalism lacked the necessary social and class backing among these

strata of the population. It was not fortuitous, therefore, that as early as 1896 the incipient programme of Economism censured by Lenin and his supporters in St. Petersburg was first formulated in Vilna, the centre of the Jewish Social-Democratic movement.

Nevertheless, for all their shortcomings, the Social-Democratic organisations within the Bund initially had a positive role to play. They rallied the working people under the banner of Social-Democracy, urged them to fight the exploiters and carried on educational work among the working people. In September 1895 Lenin visited Vilna on his way back from Switzerland. He learnt about the activities of the local Social-Democrats and enlisted their aid in putting out abroad the non-periodic Marxist publication *Rabotnik*.

Lenin's visit to Vilna left its marks on the development of the Social-Democratic movement in north-western Russia. After his visit, the local Social-Democrats strengthened their contacts with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle and the Emancipation of Labour Group.

History shows that Lenin's League of Struggle did in fact become a stronghold and a powerful stimulus for the Social-Democratic workers' movement throughout the country and promoted not only the growth, but also the centralisation of the movement. By mid-1890s, Lenin pointed out, the Social-Democratic movement had become fairly well developed. "The seeds of Social-Democratic ideas have been broadcast throughout Russia, workers' leaflets — the earliest form of Social-Democratic literature — are known to all Russian workers from St. Petersburg to Krasnoyarsk, from the Caucasus to the Urals."*

The mounting Social-Democratic movement in the country boosted the activities of Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group and breathed fresh strength into it. The police authorities pointed out that "in connection with the perceptible growth of the Social-Democratic movement in Russia over the past few years, emigrants belonging to that movement and grouping

* V. I. Lenin, "Our Immediate Task", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 216.—
Ed.

mainly in Switzerland round Axelrod and the notorious Plekhanov, who had at one time completely lost any sway, are also gaining in importance".

After Lenin met Plekhanov in 1895, Plekhanov's group maintained closer contacts with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle and other Social-Democratic organisations in Russia. Fresh impetus was given to the activities of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad founded on the initiative of the Emancipation of Labour group in 1894. In 1896-1899, the Geneva printing house of the Union put out six issues (in three books) of the Marxist *Rabotnik* publication founded on Lenin's initiative and also ten issues of the *Rabotnik Leaflet* intended for the workers.

As early as 1891, Plekhanov and Zasulich wrote, on behalf of the Russian Social-Democrats, in the report of the *Sotsial-Demokrat* editorial board to the International Socialist Congress in Brussels: "We deem it our duty to develop a network of workers' study circles in Russia and will take no part in your congresses until this task has been accomplished: until that moment any representation of Russian Social-Democracy would be a fiction." No more than five years passed before Plekhanov and his group had the actual opportunity to address the Second International on the part of Russian Social-Democracy.

In the mid-1890s, the Russian Social-Democratic movement had grown to such an extent that it could emerge on the international scene. In July 1896, Russian Social-Democracy was first represented at the International Socialist Congress in London. The Russian delegation was headed by G. V. Plekhanov, who had received his mandate from the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. The delegation made a report that informed socialists of different nations about the activities of the Social-Democratic organisations in Russia, above all the St. Petersburg League of Struggle.

This was a major event in the development of the international socialist workers' movement. The London Congress pointed out the "extremely important and until then unheard-of fact of the presence of the representatives of the Russian work-

ers' organisations at an international congress". It hailed the awakening of the Russian proletariat and, on behalf of the fighting workers of all countries, it wished their Russian brothers "courage and indomitable vigour in their hard struggle against political and economic tyranny".

In this way, in the second half of the 1890s Russian Social-Democracy was faced with the important historical task of uniting the Leagues of Struggle and all Marxist study circles and groups into a single revolutionary party of the Russian proletariat. As a result of the activities of the Leagues of Struggle led by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, the groundwork had been laid for pooling the Marxist forces on a nationwide scale. Preparations for the First Party Congress were started in practice.

WORKING TOWARDS THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

Lenin was the first to voice the idea of convening an all-Russia congress to form a party. He did that soon after his arrest in December 1895. According to Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin wrote from prison, urging the organisation of a party and insisting on preparations for a congress. In his *What the "Friends of the People" Are...* he substantiated theoretically the need to form an independent party of the working class, while now he spoke about the problem in practical terms.

The time was ripe for that. The struggle to merge socialism with the workers' movement in Russia started by the St. Petersburg and other Social-Democratic Leagues called for its organisational embodiment and centralisation. The Social-Democratic organisations that had emerged in many towns and industrial areas of Russia under the influence of Lenin's League experienced tremendous difficulties because of the disconnected nature of the movement and needed a single guiding centre. The isolated Social-Democratic study circles and groups

that had come into being on the crest of the workers' movement were constantly being jeopardised. The tsarist government regularly suppressed and paralysed the activities of the local organisations, destroying the results of their strenuous work. It was only natural, therefore, that members of the Moscow, Kiev, and other Leagues of Struggle followed the St. Petersburg Marxists in raising the question of a congress. In short, the idea of a congress was in the air and dominated the minds of many a Social-Democrat. Under the circumstances, it was not historically justified to procrastinate in preparing for the congress.

Lenin's theoretical and practical activities during the St. Petersburg period offered an important prerequisite for the formation of the party. His works during that period dealt the final blow at the ideology of Narodism and illuminated the road towards a revolutionary Marxist workers' party in Russia. While in prison, Lenin worked on the first draft of the future party programme and wrote an explanatory note about it. In this explanation to the *Draft Programme* he formulated the content of its three components — the first part of the programme elucidated the situation of the working class in a bourgeois society, the second set forth the basic tasks facing the party, and the third put forward the specific demands of the proletariat and the entire working people in combating autocracy.

In the *Draft Programme* Lenin clearly outlined the class essence of Russian Social-Democracy and defined its immediate and final aims. Briefly, they boiled down to two main demands: first, to the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and gaining democratic freedoms and, second, to seizing power by the proletariat and building a new society. "...This struggle of the working class against the capitalist class," Lenin's *Draft Programme* stated, "is a struggle against all classes who live by the labour of others, and against all exploitation. It can only end in the passage of political power into the hands of the working class, the transfer of all the land, instruments, factories, machines and mines to the whole of society for the organisation of socialist production, under which all that is produced by the

workers and all improvements in production must benefit the working people themselves.”*

The Party's first programme document, which Lenin completed by the summer of 1896, differed favourably from the draft programmes of Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group. It was free from any influence by Narodism or Lassalle's ideas** and gave the fullest possible expression to the outstanding demands of the Social-Democratic movement in the country. Lenin's manuscript *Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party* found its way out of the prison and was read by some members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. Members of the Emancipation of Labour group also knew the content of the draft programme.

Successes scored in practice by the St. Petersburg Social-Democrats led by Lenin served as a point of departure in working towards forming a party and convening its first congress. It is only natural, therefore, that the St. Petersburg Social-Democrats were the first to set about following Lenin's advice and drawing up instructions with regard to the organisation of the party.

Nadezhda Krupskaya was asked by those members of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle who remained free first to discuss the problem of convening a congress with the Kiev Social-Democrats, and she left for the Ukraine. “In the summer of 1896,” she wrote, “I went to Kiev to discuss the publication of a common illegal newspaper and preparations for a party congress. I was to see Vera Kryzhanovskaya and Tuchapsky. But I went first to Poltava and met Tuchapsky, Rumyantsev, Aron Lurye and Sammer there. We had come to an agreement on everything in Poltava.”

Unfortunately, no more specific information about the content and results of the Poltava conference are available. Krups-

* V. I. Lenin, “Draft and Explanation of a Programme for the Social-Democratic Party”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 95-96.— *Ed.*

** The first draft programme of the Emancipation of Labour group recognised the “need for terrorist struggle against the absolute government”, while the second contained Lassalle's demand for “state aid to production associations”.— *Ed.*

kaya hurried away from Poltava and back to St Petersburg where a general strike of textile workers was coming to a head and vigorously joined the strike action together with other League members. Then new arrests followed that further weakened the St Petersburg League of Struggle.

But Lenin's idea of convening a party congress had already firmly implanted itself in the minds of Russian Marxists, and one after another the Social Democratic organisations under took to put it into effect. In the spring of 1896 the congress issue was discussed at the Moscow Workers' League. A draft plan for the work of the congress was drawn up and circulated among Social Democratic organisations in some other towns. The Moscow Marxists did, nevertheless, fail in their attempts to take the initiative in convening the congress. They were prevented by another exposure of the Workers' League, as a result of which the police arrested the majority of its activists.

A conference of the representatives of the St Petersburg, Kiev and Vilna organisations and the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad was held in Zurich (Switzerland) in 1897. Its participants also raised the question of the need to pool forces and form a party. Other organisations, according to some data, the Ekaterinoslav Marxists, for example, also arrived at the idea of convening a congress, but failed to implement it. Preparations for the First Party Congress were made in difficult circumstances when leaders and activists of the Social Democratic movement were being arrested one after another. The St. Petersburg and Moscow Leagues were dealt especially severe blows.

Some modern Western historiographers distort the historic truth by asserting that the Bund was "the chief organiser of the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party". These allegations are absolutely groundless. It has already been shown before that Lenin was the initiator of the Congress, while the Kiev Social Democrats who were familiar with Lenin's works and maintained close contacts with the St Petersburg League of Struggle became its immediate organisers, owing to historical conditions.

According to Eidelman, the Kiev Social Democrats, who

formed the Rabocheye Dyelo group, from the very beginning set themselves the task of uniting the Social Democratic organisations "both on a local, city and inter-city scale" Beginning with the spring of 1897 that group launched direct preparations for convening a party congress Its leaders visited certain cities (St Petersburg, Moscow, Vilna and Ivanovo Voznesensk), familiarised themselves with the state of affairs in the local Social Democratic movement and enlisted support in convening a unifying congress in Kiev After completing those preparations, N A Vigdorchik went to deliver invitations to the congress The St Petersburg League of Struggle, the Moscow Workers' League, the Ivanovo Voznesensk Workers' League, and the Vilna Social Democratic organisation were among those invited

The first attempt proved to be abortive, however In actual fact, only one delegate from the St Petersburg League of Struggle came to Kiev Then B Gorev (Goldman), the St Petersburg delegate, N A Vigdorchik and K A Petrusevich, who represented two Kiev groups, held a conference in Kiev on March 17 18 (29 30), which went down in history as the pre congress conference It passed a resolution to change the name of all Social Democratic organisations to Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, following the St Petersburg's example This action showed both the recognition accorded to Lenin's League and the higher level of the Social Democratic movement in general Besides, it was decided to found an all Russia newspaper in Kiev and, in order to carry out practical preparations for the congress, to set up a special group, which was given the name of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group It spearheaded all the practical activities towards convening the First Party Congress It was a well organised group which operated in strict conspiracy, headed by the experienced and active professional revolutionary B L Eidelman *

* Tuchapsky recalled that Eidelman was distinguished in those years for his willpower untiring energy and great exactingness to himself and others in what had to do with our work He was extremely devoted to our cause and lived solely for its sake It is not surprising therefore that he exercised tremendous influence on the group Ed

The group started preparations for the congress by founding the *Rabochaya Gazeta*. That was an exceptionally difficult problem not only as far as ideology and politics were concerned, but also with regard to organisation and equipment. Working as yet on the scale of study circles, the *Rabochaya Gazeta* editors had to go far beyond the level of local Social-Democratic organisations and to reflect the general interests of the party, to prepare the necessary materials for uniting in a party, to find the type and to equip an illegal printing press. It took almost the entire summer of 1897 to accomplish the task.

Members of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group gathered and prepared the material to be published in the newspaper and maintained contacts with Social-Democratic organisations in other towns in a bid to cover the key events occurring in the workers' movement as far as possible. By the summer of 1897 work on establishing an underground printing press had been completed.

The first issue of *Rabochaya Gazeta* came out on August 22. "I remember the feeling of triumph," Tuchapsky recalled, "that seized us when we saw that first issue of what was no longer a local but a Social-Democratic newspaper, which had come into being through our efforts and which laid the foundations for our future party."

The quotation from the *Communist Manifesto*, "Working Men of All Countries, Unite!", was chosen as an epigraph to the newspaper. The contents of the issue did, on the whole, correspond to the purpose of the newspaper as the mouthpiece of all-Russia's Social-Democrats. It carried fairly extensive information for that period about the workers' movement in the country's main centres. Apart from individual reports from St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Kiev, Riga, Warsaw, and Vilna, the editorial headlined "The Importance of a Workers' Newspaper to the Russian Workers' Movement" contained vast data on strike action in 1895-1897. The survey described disturbances, strikes, and other development in the workers' movement in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Vilna, Białystok, Nizhny Novgorod, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Yaroslavl, and Kostroma.

The newspaper laid special emphasis on covering the St. Petersburg workers' movement and the activities of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. For example, the *Rabochaya Gazeta* said in an editorial that "the Russian workers' movement has proved to the entire world that it not only exists, but already has considerable potential" and stressed that nobody could doubt it after the famous strikes by St. Petersburg workers in 1896-1897. "St. Petersburg workers with their glorious League form a formidable vanguard in the army of Russian workers. Their heroic struggle accompanied by a host of sacrifices sets an example for workers throughout the rest of Russia..."

The nationwide significance of the first issue of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* was reflected not only in its copious information about the workers' movement in the country, but also in its formulation of the general tasks facing the movement. "The Russian workers' movement has now grown to such an extent," the editorial read, "that it is necessary to think about the Russian workers' constant communication with each other, about their mutual assistance in their struggle and about their close fraternal alliance. Only when they are united into a single powerful party will the Russian workers defeat the factory owners and the government." The newspaper exposed the tsarist government as a force that supported "the factory owners and the landowners against the workers". The article "Russian Capitalism and the Workers' Movement in Russia" said that the overthrow of tsarism was the immediate task of the workers' movement, after which there would be a period of struggle for its final goals. "The autocratic government of the Russian tsar should be the first to fall. With the downfall of the Russian autocracy the fetters that restrain Russian workers on all sides will disappear, and Russian workers will come face to face with their closest enemy — the bourgeoisie." The column "Life Abroad" informed Russian workers about the situation of workers and the peasants in West-European countries.

The first issue of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* did, however, have its shortcomings. Its articles and reports, with the exception of the editorial, which stated that, organised in a party, the

workers would defeat the factory owners and the government, were not forceful enough in mirroring the principled policy of Russian Social-Democracy and its political programme. Among others, Plekhanov pointed out this shortcoming in the first issue and recommended that the editors make greater effort to spread "in our ranks correct views on the political tasks of our party in Russia".

Although the members of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group thought they did not "really deserve" to be rebuked by Plekhanov for "ignoring political struggle", they also admitted that the first issue was somewhat restricted in its scope. The editors had to do a good deal to ensure that the articles in the next issue were more profound and outspoken in their political pronouncements.

The second issue of *Rabochaya Gazeta* was published in mid-December 1897 and became another landmark in the activities of the Kiev Social-Democrats. Thorough work had been carried out on the basis of what were now wider and stronger contacts maintained by the Kiev Social-Democrats with the Social-Democratic organisations in the country's most important centres. When work on the issue was nearing completion, the leaders of the publishing group got acquainted with the latest issue of the *St. Petersburg Workers' News-Sheet* and, what was most important, with Lenin's work "The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats". It was, beyond doubt, under the influence of these publications that they deemed it necessary to revise and make amendments to the second issue of the newspaper, its editorial in particular, which had already been sent to the printer's. Eidelman who headed the group wrote about it later on: "I persuaded one of my colleagues to revise the second issue, offering the desirable alterations for the editorial, in fact changing the topic itself."

As a result, the second issue, especially its editorial "The Immediate Tasks of the Russian Workers' Movement" had a clear-cut political message. The ample information about the workers' struggle against the employers to improve their situation brimmed with diverse exposures of the tsarist autocracy as an advocate of capitalist exploitation and a strangler of

the freedom of the workers and the entire working population in the country. The workers' struggle against the tsarist autocracy and for political freedom was substantiated and propagandised as the immediate task facing the workers' movement, and the need to unite the Social-Democratic workers' organisations in Russia into a single political party of the all-Russia proletariat was given as the main prerequisite in accomplishing this task. "It is time," the editorial said, "for individual workers' study circles and leagues scattered all over the country to form a single all-embracing union or a single common party. This party will facilitate the unification of the Russian workers and promote the growth of the Russian workers' movement; it will channel the forces and the money from where they are in excess to where they are in demand; it will lead the Russian workers' struggle and strive to make this struggle coherent and organised."

Later, in *A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats* Lenin wrote that, following the St. Petersburg workers' newspaper (*St. Petersburg Workers' News-Sheet* No. 2, September 1897) which called on the workers to unite into a "strong party", the same idea was expounded in the second issue of the *Rabochaya Gazeta*. He underlined the following idea of its editorial: "The fight against the autocratic government for political liberty is the immediate task of the Russian working-class movement." "The Russian working-class movement will increase its forces tenfold if it comes out as a single harmonious whole, with a common name and a well-knit organisation..." "The separate workers' circles should combine into one common party." "The Russian workers' party will be a Social-Democratic Party." "...These views of *Rabochaya Gazeta* were fully shared by the vast majority of Russian Social-Democrats..."*

As you can see, Lenin observed the community and continuity in the St. Petersburg and Kiev Social-Democrats' formulation of the immediate tasks of the Social-Democratic workers' movement and their bringing of "broad political demands"

* V. I. Lenin, "A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 179-80.—Ed.

to the fore.* The *Rabochaya Gazeta* did in fact elaborate Lenin's line pursued by the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. "What banner is going to fly as the banner of the Russian workers' movement?" the newspaper asked and replied: "Of course, that very banner on which the great teachers of the workers Marx and Engels inscribed the words 'Working Men of All Countries, Unite!'; that banner under which the advanced workers of all countries of the globe fight and round which nearly all the workers' circles, funds and leagues rally in Russia. It is the red banner of international Social-Democracy."

An analysis of the contents of the two issues of *Rabochaya Gazeta* shows that the organisers of the congress did, on the whole, keep abreast of the contemporary tasks of Russian Social-Democracy and intended to form the future party on the basis of revolutionary Marxism and proletarian internationalism. The publication and circulation of the newspaper helped Russian Social-Democrats to arrive at the idea of a unifying party congress. This was not sufficient, however. The results of the agitational and propaganda activities of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* had to be consolidated organisationally: to begin with, the Leagues of Struggle and the largest Social-Democratic study groups had to be given an idea of the draft agenda of the congress and to guarantee their representation at the congress.

The Colloquium Rules (that was how the agenda of the congress was called for reasons of conspiracy), worked out by the Kiev Social-Democrats, set forth the unification of disconnected Social-Democratic organisations into a single party as the chief aim of the First Party Congress. It could be attended solely by those leagues and groups that recognised the timeliness of such a unification. Each organisation had the right to send two delegates to the congress, one representing the intelligentsia, the other the workers. The Rules insisted on furnishing of delegates with broad powers enabling them to actively participate in the work of the congress. At the

* V. I. Lenin, "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 259.— Ed.

same time, local organisations were to provide their delegates with the right to take certain decisions on the most important issues.

Further, the Rules of the congress named the main problems to be discussed — the form of the association, a Central Committee with permanent powers or some other type of an institution; the name of the party; the powers and functions of the Central Committee; party publications (*Rabochaya Gazeta*, the publication of pamphlets and books); finances; relations with other revolutionary organisations, etc.

The organisers of the congress came up against serious difficulties. Mounting repressions forced many active Social-Democrats to go deep underground, which restricted their activity and weakened their contacts with the workers at large. Frequent arrests of the more experienced functionaries adversely affected the proletariat's strike action and promoted the growth of spontaneous element in it. Social-Democrats who remained free at the time became increasingly infected with opportunism, whose advocates persuaded workers to renounce political struggle.

Later on, this opportunist trend became known as Economism. In 1897, its representatives in St. Petersburg (Takhtarev, Chernyshev and others) formed an independent group, published the newspaper *Rabochaya Mysl* (Workers' Thought) and sought to transform the activities of the League of Struggle along trade union lines. The early or, as they called themselves "young" Economists, became especially active abroad and ousted Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group from the leadership of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats. "The 'young comrades'," Plekhanov wrote of them, "considered themselves representatives of a new trend in Russian Social-Democracy, whereas ... there is neither socialism nor democracy in this trend."* The "young" Social-Democrats, who voiced the sentiments of the backward sections of the proletariat, obstructed the convocation of the unifying congress and the formation of a centralised party. They advocated spontaneity

* G. V. Plekhanov, *Works*, Vol. 12, p. 25 (in Russian).— *Ed.*

in the workers' movement and organisational disunity among the Social-Democrats.

The organisers of the First RSDLP Congress should be credited with adhering to the principled line of Social-Democracy in 1894-1896 charted by Lenin's League of Struggle and with resisting the opportunist wavering of the Economists. Only those Social-Democratic organisations that were quite mature politically and had shown they were capable of guiding the proletariat's class struggle were invited to the congress. The St. Petersburg, Kiev, Moscow and Ekaterinoslav Leagues of Struggle and also the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group and the Bund were the first to receive invitations. For various reasons the representatives of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk League and the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party,* though invited to the congress, were unable to attend it, while the Kharkov Social-Democratic organisation refused to take part in the congress, believing it to be premature.

While preparing for the congress, the Kiev Social-Democrats got to know the state of affairs in the Social-Democratic activities in some cities. As a result of their knowledge, the right of representation at the congress was denied to the St. Petersburg group of the Young and also to the Odessa and Nikolayev organisations because of their inadequate conspiracy. The *Rabocheye Znamya* (Workers' Banner) group, still lacking any definite stand, was not invited to the congress either. "Our connections throughout Russia," Eidelman pointed out, "were much broader than the organisations whose representatives attended the congress; we knew of towns where the workers' movement existed, and these towns might have been represented at the congress but for the need for conspiracy."

* The Ivanovo-Voznesensk League took no part in the congress because it had been routed by the police. The Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party agreed to send a representative to the congress, but failed to do so, pleading arrests. Later, F. E. Dzerzhinsky, an active member of Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party, explained the absence of its delegate at the congress by nationalistic sentiments. He regretted that in 1898, while he was in prison, the Lithuanian Social-Democrats did not join the united Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.— *Ed.*

The Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad did not get an invitation to send a delegate to the congress either. The reason for this was the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group's poor contacts with Plekhanov's Emancipation of Labour group. Tuchapsky, who had visited Geneva, said that Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich were not "particularly enthusiastic about our undertakings".

At first, the congress was to be convened in Kiev, but the vigorous activity of the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group had attracted the attention of the police to it. That was why Minsk, a quiet provincial town at the time that did not evoke the suspicion of the tsarist secret police, was chosen as the venue of the congress. Social-Democrats with reliable connections in Minsk undertook to make arrangements for holding the congress.

THE FIRST CONGRESS: A MILESTONE IN SETTING UP THE PARTY

The First RSDLP Congress was held at the house of the Social-Democrat P. V. Romyantsev, on the outskirts of Minsk, on March 1-3 (13-15), 1898. It was conducted in strict secrecy, and workers' pickets were posted in case of police surveillance. No minutes were taken and only resolutions were recorded. Other documents of the congress could be destroyed immediately in the continuously heated stove.

All in all, the congress was attended by nine delegates from six organisations: S. I. Radchenko, from the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, A. A. Vannovsky, from the Moscow League of Struggle, K. A. Petrusevich, from the Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle, P. L. Tuchapsky, from the Kiev League of Struggle and the Workers' Committee, B. L. Eidelman and N. A. Vigdorchik, from the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group, A. I. Kremer, A. Mutnik and Sh. Katz, from the Bund.

Eidelman presided at the congress, while Vigdorchik and Tuchapsky were elected secretaries. The aforementioned Colloquium Rules which had been brought to the knowledge

of all the Social-Democratic organisations served as the agenda for the congress.

The main issue at the congress was the formation of the party. The delegates unanimously decided to unite all the Social-Democratic organisations into a single party. The congress resolution read: "The organisations of the Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group and the Jewish General Workers' Union of Russia and Poland are merging to form a single organisation called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party." A dispute has arisen only with regard to the name of the party. In keeping with the Colloquium Rules, the delegates were given the following variants for consideration: the Russian Social-Democratic Party, the Russian Workers' Party and the Russian Workers' League. The debates resulted in a consensus opinion that the future organisation should be Social-Democratic and called *Rossiiskaya* rather than *Russkaya*.^{*} Some delegates, however, objected to calling the party Labour under the pretext that there were as yet few workers in the Social-Democratic organisations at the time. The name the *Rossiiskaya* Social-Democratic Party was carried by the congress by five votes to four. The word Labour was included in the name after the congress with the consent of two Central Committee members, when the RSDLP Manifesto was written.

The decision of the congress to call the party "*Rossiiskaya*" was a matter of principle. It emphasised that the party meant to unite in its ranks workers of all the nationalities inhabiting Russia. "To dispel any idea of its being national in character," Lenin wrote, "the Party called itself '*Rossiiskaya*' and not '*Russkaya*'."^{**}

After they had founded the party, the participants in the congress discussed the question of attitude to the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Because of its petty-bourgeois, nationalist

^{*} *Rossiiskaya* means in Russian pertaining to all Russia as a multi-national state, while *Russkaya* denotes ethnic Russian.— *Ed.*

^{**} V. I. Lenin, "To the Jewish Workers", *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 496.— *Ed.*

programme, this organisation was not invited to the congress, but it fought for the overthrow of tsarism and was regarded as a "friendly foreign power". Therefore, after protracted debates in connection with the Polish Socialist Party, the congress formulated its general attitude to the organisations of that type and passed the following resolution: "Through its Central Committee the Party establishes relations with other revolutionary organisations, as this does not violate its programme principles nor its tactical methods. The Party recognises the right of every nationality to self-determination."

It should be pointed out that, in discussing the specific question of attitude to the PPS, the congress adopted a correct approach to one of the principles of our party's future programme. The programme principle of national self-determination endorsed by the First Congress was yet another confirmation of the internationalist nature of the RSDLP and favourably influenced the further development of the proletariat's revolutionary struggle.

The congress heard delegates' reports on the situation in different towns and passed a resolution on the Party's organisational framework. The resolution, which contained 11 points, dealt with the formation of the Party, its name, Party congresses and the procedure for their convocation, the duties of the Central Committee and the local committees, the Party funds, its newspaper and representation abroad. It was resolved that the congress of the local committee delegates was the highest body of the Party, which elected the Central Committee — the Party's executive body. It was to be concerned with the Party's regular activities, to publish literature and supply the local committees with it, to carry on campaigns of nationwide importance, e. g., May Day celebrations, issuing leaflets in connection with outstanding events, and organising help to strikers.

When urgent decisions were called for, the Central Committee was to make them on its own, reporting to the forthcoming congress. In tackling especially important, but not pressing problems, the Central Committee was to refer to the Party

congress. The Central Committee had the right to swell its ranks with new members not elected by the congress. Relations with other revolutionary organisations at home and abroad were the responsibility of the Central Committee alone. It was also to be in charge of the Party funds made up of voluntary lump sums paid by the local committees, when the Party was formed, of voluntary regular assignments by the local committees and of special party fund-raising campaigns.

The Union of Russian Social-Democrats abroad was declared to be part of the RSDLP and its representative abroad.

In settling organisational problems, the question arose of the relationship between autonomy and centralism. The organisers of the congress, according to Eidelman, advocated a strong central organisation, aware that the aim of the congress was to rally Social-Democratic elements round one centre and to create an efficient centre for the organisations.... But the customs and traditions of study circle work were still very strong. Delegates' speeches evinced fear lest the Rules should be of too centralised a nature. These were the sentiments that Eidelman had in mind when he wrote: "Party spirit had to be instilled. This could not be accomplished merely by decrees. Nothing but the practical, prolonged and fruitful work of the Central Committee could gradually do away with parochialism and supplant it by party spirit."

For these reasons, the congress was unable to consistently adhere to the principle of centralism. The local committees were given extensive authority and could implement the Central Committee resolutions in any form they might find suitable to local conditions. In extreme cases, they could even refuse to meet the demands of the Central Committee, informing it about the causes of their refusal. "In all other cases," the congress resolution said, "the local committees act quite on their own, guided exclusively by the party programme."

The Bund was accorded even greater autonomy. It could act entirely independently as far as problems pertaining specifically to the Jewish proletariat were concerned. This enabled it to carry out propaganda in the vernacular, to publish

literature, to convene congresses and to meet the local needs and demands stemming from the peculiarities of the Jewish way of life. Nevertheless, after the congress the Bund leaders were not satisfied with autonomy and insisted on the federative structure of the RSDLP. "Instead of carrying on the work begun by the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party towards still closer unity between the Bund and the Party," Lenin wrote, "the Bund moved a step away from the Party" *.

When assessing the congress decision to give broad autonomy to the local committees today, one comes to the inevitable conclusion that this was historically justified. Autonomy not only hindered the federalism advocated by the Bund to a certain extent. The Social Democratic study circles and groups had long since existed in isolation from each other and could not reject their customs and traditions of the circle period right away. The weak points of the RSDLP organisational statute, as defined by the resolutions of the First Congress, reflected the inadequate level of maturity of the Social Democratic movement of the time and the insufficient understanding of the need to subordinate local interests to the general tasks of the Party. Nevertheless, the Minsk Congress made the first step in establishing the principle of centralism in the Russian Social Democratic movement. "These first Party Rules were in fact a mere chart to be filled with specific content by practice," stated the Report to the Amsterdam International Socialist Congress compiled in the autumn of 1904 with the participation of Lenin, who was also its editor. "But already this chart clearly showed that even in that early period of our struggle the Central Committee was given great authority. Anything outside the bounds of local activities and anything which was within the bounds of local activities but was of a general nature was to be relegated to the competence of the Central Committee, responsible only to the party congress."

The congress outlined the organisational statute of the Party but failed to give it a scientifically substantiated programme

* V I Lenin "To the Jewish Workers" *Collected Works*, Vol 8 p 496
Ed

Work on it was supposed to be undertaken in the near future. The participants in the congress hoped that the party programme would be discussed by the second congress they planned to hold at the very latest six months after the first one.

This is not to say, however, that the organisers and the participants in the congress in general ignored the issue of the programme. On the eve of the congress it was discussed by the St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev Social-Democrats. For instance, the latter had prepared for the congress the so-called Kiev Rules (draft resolutions of the congress), which said: "The delegates have the right to consider and approve a programme, if presented, or otherwise work out and make public a manifesto." The draft manifesto had been written by Tuchapsky and simultaneously served as a draft programme. It was, however, rejected by the *Rabochaya Gazeta* group even before the congress, firstly, because it ignored the agrarian problem and, secondly, because, while it was being discussed, the organisers of the congress did, according to Eidelman, still hope to get a more circumstantial document. They had apparently been awaiting a draft programme from Lenin or Plekhanov.

This is corroborated by the fact that the St. Petersburg Social-Democrats in their draft programme of the work of the congress (the St. Petersburg Rules) also envisaged working out a general party programme and gave assurances that the St. Petersburg League of Struggle would submit a motivated draft programme. There can be no doubt that the authors of the St. Petersburg Rules had in mind Lenin's *Draft Programme of the Social-Democratic Party and Explanations to It*, all the more so since the key propositions of the "motivated draft" these Rules contained accorded with the spirit and meaning of Lenin's draft programme. When, at the close of the congress, Tuchapsky declared that "G. V. Plekhanov should be asked to work out a party programme together with the solemn declaration of its establishment", Radchenko proposed that the task be entrusted to the St. Petersburg organisation. Appreciative of the activities of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, the congress agreed to the proposal of the St. Petersburg delegate and pointed out that such a

programme would be made public after it had been considered by local committees.

For reasons that remained so far obscure (apparently, arrests and the declining activity of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle interfered with it), Lenin's draft was never submitted to the participants in the congress as a programme document. Eidelman wrote subsequently that they lacked "both the time and strength" to compose a programme. The situation was aggravated by wholesale police repressions against the Social-Democrats. The following events showed that it took great effort on the part of the entire *Iskra* editorial board headed by Lenin to work out a truly Marxist party programme.

The Congress elected a Central Committee of three people: S. I. Radchenko, B. L. Eidelman, and A. I. Kremer.* Even before the congress finished its work, the newly formed Central Committee managed to hold several meetings in Minsk and discuss some pending problems. For instance, it roughly estimated the Party's budget and decided to contact the Union of Russian Social-Democrats abroad, informing it of the resolutions of the congress. The congress closed its work on March 3(15). In the evening, the delegates assembled for

* S. I. Radchenko (1868-1911) had been active in the Social-Democratic movement since the early 1890s, when, as a student at the St. Petersburg Technological Institute, he disseminated revolutionary propaganda in the workers' study circles under M. I. Brusnev's group. After the group was broken up in 1892, he escaped arrest and joined an associated Marxist study circle of technology students (the so-called group of the Old, which Lenin contacted somewhat later); beginning with the mid-1890s, he was active in Lenin's League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, a member of its leading nucleus in charge of the League's connections and conspiratorial equipment; in late February 1898 he represented the St. Petersburg League of Struggle at the First RSDLP Congress, and, later on, played an important part in establishing links between the St. Petersburg Social-Democrats and the editorial board of Lenin's *Iskra*; in 1902, he was arrested and banished to the Vologda Gubernia; on his return he took part in the October 1905 political strike in Moscow; gravely ill, he withdrew from active political work in subsequent years.

B. L. Eidelman (1867-1939), a professional revolutionary who started his Social-Democratic activity in Kiev study circles; in 1895, together with Yu. D. Melnikov, he organised the first Workers' Committee, which disseminated Marxist ideas among Kiev's revolutionary-minded intelligentsia and advanced

the last time before their departure. They expressed their wish that more workers attend the next congress and decided to send a message of greetings to Plekhanov in connection with the fifteenth anniversary of the Emancipation of Labour group's publishing activities and also to send a message of greetings to the German Social-Democrats.

The delegates went home greatly inspired and firmly believing in the triumph of the working class' cause, ready to start implementing the decisions of the First RSDLP Congress. For instance, after his return to Kiev, Tuchapsky made reports on the work of the congress at the Kiev League of Struggle and Workers' Committee. The resolutions of the congress were approved. "It seemed," he recalled, "that our work will be better and even more successful than before. A mere week after my return, however, the Kiev organisation was routed."

In the early hours of March 12, wholesale arrests were carried out in 27 towns of European Russia, and 500 people, including the Central Committee member Eidelman, were detained by the police. The *Rabochaya Gazeta* printing press together with the materials for its third issue were seized in Ekaterinoslav.

workers. B. L. Eidelman was a prominent leader of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic movement in the 1890s who organised and took part in the activities of the Marxist *Rabocheye Dyelo* and *Rabochaya Gazeta* groups; after the First Congress he was arrested and exiled to the Yakutsk Gubernia. He came from exile to St. Petersburg where he participated in the revolutionary events of 1905, got arrested again and imprisoned. After the October Revolution he worked in the People's Commissariat of Labour, taught at the VTsIK military school in the period from 1919 to 1925 and remained a Bolshevik to his dying day.

A. I. Kremer (1865-1935) engaged in revolutionary activities in Riga where he attended a polytechnic; in 1889, he was implicated during the investigation of the Proletariat Party case; after serving a prison sentence in the St. Petersburg Kresty, he was exiled to Vilna under secret police surveillance, joined the Vilna Social-Democratic group, wrote the pamphlet "On Agitation" and was one of the Bund's founders and leaders; in the summer of 1898, after the First Party Congress, he was arrested; he attended the Second RSDLP Congress as a delegate with a consultative voice; was a member of the RSDLP Central Committee from the Bund after the Fourth (Unifying) Congress, withdrew from the Bund Central Committee after the Fifth RSDLP Congress and refrained from political activities.— *Ed.*

Besides Kremer, who was, however, arrested soon afterwards, Radchenko also remained free. He returned to St. Petersburg and began preparing the RSDLP Manifesto, which the Central Committee was asked to compose by the congress. Radchenko found himself in a fix: the best of the literary people and theoreticians among the St. Petersburg League of Struggle with Lenin at the head had been arrested by the police. He had to turn to P. B. Struve, who was an experienced writer, then regarded as an ally of Social-Democracy, who participated in publishing literature together with revolutionary Marxists. It is worth noting here that under the impact of Lenin's criticism Struve shifted considerably to the left for a while and still cherished his contacts with the Social-Democratic movement. This is why he willingly accepted Radchenko's proposal and wrote the text of the document that, edited by the two Central Committee members Radchenko and Kremer, has gone down in history as the Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

In his article "My Contacts and Conflicts with Lenin" published in 1934, Struve described his stand, when composing the Manifesto in the following way: "...Manifesto ... still expressed the official or orthodox conception — I did my best to avoid putting into it any of my personal views, which would have either seemed heretical or been incomprehensible to an average Social-Democrat. Therefore the Manifesto which, though written by me in its elementary and drastic statement of Marxism, did not in the least correspond to my personal and more complex views of that period..."*

This is his own confession, and indeed there is nothing fallacious or "heretical" in the Manifesto, nothing that went beyond the Social-Democratic world outlook. It should also be added that the RSDLP Manifesto was not the party programme, which was still to be worked out, but an official document that expounded in popular form the need to rally the proletariat into an independent party and outlined in general form the

* *The Slavonic and East European Review*, London, Vol. XIII, No. 37, July, 1934, p. 75.— Ed.

immediate task in its revolutionary activity.

The content of the Manifesto did, of course, bear the imprint of Struve's authorship. Its level was inferior to that of the draft party programmes written by Lenin and Plekhanov by that time. Notwithstanding the fact, composed under the supervision of the Central Committee members, the Manifesto was the first official RSDLP programme statement that on the whole correctly pictured the Social-Democratic movement of the 1890s and mapped out its tasks.

The Manifesto opened with a statement concerning the historic role of the West-European proletariat awakened to life by the 1848 revolutions. Capitalist relations meanwhile developed in Russia, and along with them the working class emerged and grew. "The Russian factory workers, serfs and freemen, have always fought covertly or overtly against their exploiters. As capitalism developed the scope of that fighting grew, encompassing ever wider sections of the working population. The awakening of class consciousness among the Russian proletariat and the growth of the spontaneous workers' movement coincided with the consummate development of international Social-Democracy as the bearer of the class struggle and the class ideal of conscious workers throughout the world."

The Manifesto listed the first successes scored by Russia's workers in strike action and demanded political freedom. This freedom, it declared, was as necessary to the Russian proletariat as fresh air; the workers needed it not only to improve their situation under capitalism but also for their struggle to attain the final goal — socialism.

The Manifesto was keynoted by the idea of the Russian working class' independent role in the revolutionary struggle. It said: "The farther one goes to the east of Europe, the weaker, more cowardly and ignoble is the bourgeoisie in politics, and the bigger are the cultural and political tasks the proletariat has to tackle. The Russian working class should and will shoulder the cause of winning political freedom. This is the necessary, though only initial, step towards fulfilling the proletariat's historic mission of building a social system, in which there will be no exploitation of man by man. The Rus-

sian proletariat will throw off the yoke of autocracy to continue fighting capitalism and the bourgeoisie more energetically until the final victory of socialism."

The Manifesto stressed in conclusion that with the unification of local Social-Democratic organisations into a single party the revolutionary movement of Russia's proletariat would enter a "new era of conscious class struggle". The RSDLP carried on the cause and traditions of its revolutionary predecessors, but chose different avenues and used different means of struggle. As a conscious exponent of the proletariat's class interests, it accords all its actions with the basic principles of international Social-Democracy.

The Manifesto and the decisions of the First RSDLP Congress were of great agitational, propaganda and organisational importance. They officially proclaimed the formation of the Social-Democratic Labour Party in Russia and formulated the general aims of its struggle. Thus, the groundwork was laid for the actual unification of the disconnected Social-Democratic organisations into a single Marxist party of Russia's proletariat.

* * *

The First RSDLP Congress was a landmark in the initial period of the Party's history. It gave the Party its name, charted the immediate goals of its struggle and greatly contributed to the merging of socialism with the workers' movement. Thus, even before the bourgeois parties emerged in Russia, the RSDLP proclaimed its independent existence.

As the first step towards the actual establishment of the party, the Congress played a major propaganda and organisational role. The news of it was enthusiastically received by all the revolutionary Social-Democrats. Reports about the work of the Congress were made at illegal meetings, and decisions were taken to join the RSDLP. Every local organisation that recognised the resolutions of the First Congress became a party component part.

On learning about the Congress, the Social-Democratic organisations of Moscow and Ivanovo-Voznesensk approved its

resolutions and sided with them. A leaflet issued in this connection by the Moscow Social-Democrats said: "We can state with profound satisfaction that our hitherto disconnected Social-Democratic groups have united into a single common organisation set up by the Congress." The Moscow and Ivanovo-Voznesensk Leagues of Struggle have been transformed into the RSDLP committees, whose members were set the task of establishing contacts with the RSDLP Central Committee, of working towards the closer unity of local Marxist study circles, etc.

Soon after the First Congress the Ukrainian Social-Democrats responded to its resolutions. Copies of the RSDLP Manifesto were strewn in Kiev streets in May 1898. The Kiev and Ekaterinoslav Leagues of Struggle were transformed into the RSDLP committees. "...Early this year," the appeal "To All the Ekaterinoslav Workers" emphasised, "the workers' leagues of all Russian towns held out their hands to one another, like comrades, and at a joint congress of their representatives decided to unite in a single common alliance, which they called the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. This Party will promote the unification of all Russian workers, lead the workers' struggle and correctly distribute the funds among the workers' unions, etc. United by the workers' party, the Russian workers' movement will make headway... Comrades, let us courageously fight for a better lot and wholeheartedly congratulate ourselves on the emergence of the workers' party, as a harbinger of a better future. The Ekaterinoslav League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class is happy to report that, following the example of the workers' leagues in other towns, it has joined the RSDLP and from now on will be called the Ekaterinoslav committee of the RSDLP."

The very fact of the convocation of the Congress and the formation of the RSDLP inspired the Social-Democrats and called for greater unity and solidarity and for a stepped up revolutionary struggle against oppression by tsarism and the bourgeoisie.

For the first time, the documents adopted by the Congress were published secretly in Russia in April 1898, and in June

reprinted by the Geneva *Rabotnik Leaflet* edited by G. V. Plekhanov. The commentary to these documents stressed that the appearance of the RSDLP and its Manifesto was an impressive success of our working-class movement. "We are convinced," the journal editorial said, "that the common organisation of the Russian Social-Democrats will go on growing and being consolidated till the working-class movement becomes an enormous flow that ... will finally sweep away with its powerful current the political oppression hanging over Russia and clear the way for the free and extensive struggle for the complete and all-round emancipation of the working people at large."

Lenin, who was in exile in Siberia at that time, was heartened by the news of the congress. P. N. Lepeshinsky recalled that Lenin welcomed the First Party Congress as enthusiastically as anyone. According to him, Lenin was filled with profound pride when he told his closest friends in exile and associates that "from now on he was a member of the RSDLP. With great pleasure we, too, took up this tune so novel to us and seemed to have grown in our own eyes right away".

Despite the tsarist authorities' strict bans, the news of the First RSDLP Congress reached not only the most diverse regions of the country but also went beyond its borders, evoking lively interest among the Social-Democrats in all the major European countries. The Manifesto and the resolutions of the Congress were published by the Social-Democratic and workers' press in Berlin, Paris, and London. The advanced workers of Western Europe heartily welcomed the appearance of the socialist party of the Russian proletariat fighting in the difficult conditions of tsarism. Even the bourgeois press responded to that event. For instance, the conservative German *Tägliche Rundschau* (Daily Review) wrote, without trying to conceal its surprise: "For the present-day world it remains a complete mystery and for the Russian government it is still, in all probability, not clear yet how this could happen so suddenly and with such tremendous success."

The opportunists who sought to confine the Russian workers' movement to the narrow framework of a purely economic,

guild struggle did not like the resolutions of the First RSDLP Congress. The so-called "young" Social-Democrats leaning towards Economism, did, in fact, refuse to recognise the Congress, considering it premature and even harmful. On learning about the resolutions of the Congress and the release of the Manifesto, Ye. Kuskova, one of the ideologists of Economism, wrote to the secretary of the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad: "Indeed I deny the existence of an acting political party in Russia at the given moment. Note: political... Let them write manifestoes. We'll see how this is going to be implemented. If the Russian comrades take it into their heads now to lead the workers to political struggle, I will consider it a provocation and an end to the entire past."

Lenin denounced the attempts of the opportunists and their supporters to distort or belittle the role of the First RSDLP Congress in the history of our Party. He thought the resolutions of the Congress were correct in officially formulating for the first time the idea of mustering Russia's proletariat for the revolutionary struggle to overthrow tsarism and capitalism and for socialism. "...We Russian Social-Democrats," Lenin pointed out, "must unite and direct all our efforts towards the formation of a strong party which must struggle under the single banner of revolutionary Social-Democracy. This is precisely the task laid down by the congress in 1898 at which the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was formed, and which published its Manifesto. We regard ourselves as members of this Party; we agree entirely with the fundamental ideas contained in the *Manifesto* and attach extreme importance to it as a public declaration of its aims."*

Acute ideological conflicts flared up with regard to the documents of the First RSDLP Congress. The Economists and the Bund members in their suit voiced displeasure with those resolutions of the Congress that emphasised the ideas of centralising the Social-Democratic movement and political struggle

* V. I. Lenin, "Declaration of the Editorial Board of *Iskra*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 353.— *Ed.*

and in general sought to decry the First Congress, bringing its significance to nought.

Addressing the Second Party Congress, the Bund member Liber tried to persuade its delegates that the Minsk Congress of 1898 had brought no fruit for the Party allegedly did not exist thereafter neither *de facto* nor *de jure*.

In this case, Liber was expressing the official stand taken by the Bund demanding that the decisions of the First RSDLP Congress be renounced and autonomy be replaced by federation. He was supported in this by Akimov, Martynov and other representatives of the economic trend in the Party. Replying to them, Lenin said on the part of the *Iskra*-ites: "Formally, we stand by the Manifesto of 1898, but the Bund has expressed a desire for a radical change in our Party's organisation."*

Lenin saw all too clearly the shortcomings of the First RSDLP Congress, but, at the same time, he assessed it as an historic event. The convocation of the congress and its decisions were for Lenin the natural outcome of the Social-Democratic movement of the 1890s, its consolidation and extension. He repeatedly stressed that the Party founded at its First Congress was deeply rooted in the mass workers' movement in Russia. By deciding to form the RSDLP, the Congress left a milestone on the path to fusing socialism with the workers' movement and creating a Marxist party of the Russian proletariat.

Needless to say, the First RSDLP Congress could not go beyond its time. "Congresses," Lenin wrote, "do not so much create something new as consolidate results already achieved."** The resolutions of the First Congress recorded only those results that the Social-Democratic movement achieved in the 1890s and mirrored both its first successes and its extremely weak points.

Although the Congress played a certain part in uniting the Social-Democratic organisations, its influence on the subsequent formation of the Party was limited from an historical

* V. I. Lenin, "First Speech on the Agenda of the Congress, July 18 (31)", *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 480.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "The Third Congress", *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 445,— *Ed.*

point of view. For certain objective and subjective reasons it could not work out the guiding principles of the RSDLP as a proletarian party of a new type nor define the scientific foundations of its revolutionary activity. Its resolutions gave the most general chart of the party organisation to be supplied with specific content. Although the congress had been convened, actual party unity had not been achieved: "...unity was still only an idea, a directive."*

The standard of the congress was adversely affected by the fact that it was carried out at a time of severe repressions by tsarism when the main theoreticians were isolated from the Social-Democratic movement, for Lenin was in exile and Plekhanov in emigration. Lenin's draft programme was not known to the majority of the congress delegates and even the so-called "St. Petersburg Rules" based on that draft was not submitted to the congress. With its main forces broken by the police, Lenin's League of Struggle, the major organiser of the congress, could not adequately influence its decisions. All this hindered the working out of the scientific principles that could have formed the necessary foundation for a militant Marxist party of the Russian proletariat capable of operating successfully in the new historical epoch.

The main reason for the uncertain correlation between the resolutions of the First Congress and the prospective development of the RSDLP as a party of a new type was that the conditions necessary for the formation of such a party in the given period (1894-98) had only just begun to take shape. Both the objective conditions, aggravated social antagonisms connected with the setting in of imperialism, and the subjective ones, the delimitation of the opposite camps in Russian and international Social-Democracy and the evolution of Lenin's teaching of the party had not fully developed by that time; their characteristic features became pronounced and started to exercise a decisive influence on the formation of a party of a new type only in the subsequent period between the First and

* V. I. Lenin, "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, p. 101.— *Ed.*

Second Congresses of the RSDLP. These new factors first found their expression in Lenin's plan to form the party with the help of an all-Russia political newspaper.

Right after its First Congress, the RSDLP came under a storm of police repressions. Wholesale arrests paralysed the activity of the Central Committee elected by the Congress and also of many a Social-Democratic organisation. "...All outstanding leaders of the Party," Lenin wrote, "were swept from the battlefield..."* The difficulties caused by the arrests were aggravated by the demoralising activities of the Economists, representatives of the Russian variety of international opportunism who pushed the workers' movement in Russia to the path of political apathy and reformism.

Owing to the Economists, the RSDLP entered a period of "confusion and wavering", ideological discordance and organisational amateurishness and was thrown back, abandoning the positions already gained. It seemed to have exhausted its potential, returned to its former disunity and "became a shapeless conglomeration of local Party organisations".**

The cause of the First Congress was not lost, however. The idea of centralism had already become deeply rooted and was winning supporters in growing numbers. "The Party," Lenin wrote, "has not ceased to exist, it has only withdrawn into itself in order to gather strength and put the unification of all Russian Social-Democrats on a sound footing."*** Lenin was again the one to point out the way to achieve this. Still in exile, he contributed to *Rabochaya Gazeta*, as attempts were being made to resume its publication, three articles ("Our Programme", "Our Immediate Task" and "The Urgent Problem"). In these articles he first expounded his famous plan for uniting the disconnected Social-Democratic organisations into a centralised Marxist party. The plan was based on the idea of founding

* V. I. Lenin, "To Nadezhda Krupskaya", *Collected Works*, Vol. 34, p. 46.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 479.— *Ed.*

*** V. I. Lenin, "Our Immediate Task", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 215.— *Ed.*

an all-Russia political newspaper as a means of not only ideological and political, but also organisational unification of Social-Democracy. *Iskra* founded by Lenin became such a newspaper. Lenin's plan was innovative and exemplified a creative approach to building a party that would meet the requirements of the revolutionary epoch. It has accumulated the enormous historical experience of the international and Russian emancipation movement and became creatively assimilated in keeping with the new tendencies of social development, both in Russia and the rest of the world.

Lenin warned that we had nobody to turn to for ready-made models. "The history of socialism and democracy in Western Europe, the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, the experience of our working-class movement," he wrote, "such is the *material* we must master to elaborate a purposeful organisation and purposeful tactics for our Party." " 'The analysis' of this material," he emphasised, "must, however, be done independently..."*

History showed that the principles underlying the party of a new type were worked out by the newspaper *Iskra* when it was headed by Lenin. It was during the *Iskra* period that Lenin developed a coherent theory of the party and elaborated its ideological, political and organisational principles. An extension of Marx's and Engels' ideas on the political organisation of the working class, these principles determined the radical shift from the old Social-Democratic parties of the Second International to the Bolshevik party as a model proletarian party of a new type, a shift which was of historic importance.

The work carried out by Lenin's *Iskra* aimed at forming a party of social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Resolutely combating the opportunists, *Iskra* ensured the preparations for the Second RSDLP Congress, which completed the unification of the revolutionary Marxist organisations on Lenin's ideological, political and organisational principles. The party of a new type, the Bolshevik Party, came into being. "As

* V. I. Lenin, "Our Immediate Task", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 217.—
Ed.

a current of political thought and as a political party," Lenin wrote, "Bolshevism has existed since 1903."*

As you can see, the Second RSDLP Congress was prepared much better from an ideological, theoretical and organisational point of view than the previous congress. It laid a firm foundation enabling our Party to become an invincible force. In its resolutions the Congress summed up the invaluable experience of *Iskra's* three years of struggle to rehabilitate the party, which had been destroyed by the Economists, and to work out its theoretical, political and organisational principles. The St. Petersburg League of Struggle was such a party in embryo but its major characteristics could develop and actually developed only against the historical background at the turn of the century, as a result of principled opposition to Russian and international opportunism.

When surveying this complicated and long road of struggle for the formation of the RSDLP as a party of a new type, Lenin regarded the First and Second Congresses as two stages in its historical evolution. He wrote: "Our Party began to constitute itself quite some time ago, immediately following the broad working-class movement of the 1895 and 1896. The year of 1898 saw the convocation of its First Congress, which founded the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and outlined its aims. The Second Congress was held in 1903. It gave the Party a programme, adopted a series of resolutions on tactics, and endeavoured, for the first time, to build an integral Party organisation."**

The resolutions of the Second Congress reflected the qualitatively new stage in building a Marxist Party of the proletariat. The Congress became a turning point in the development of the Russian and international workers' movement. It founded the Leninist Party of the Bolsheviks which radically differed from the Social-Democratic parties of the Second International, which had lost their former revolutionary traditions and

* V. I. Lenin, " 'Left-Wing' Communism — an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 24.— *Ed.*

** V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Third Congress of the RSDLP", *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 433-34.— *Ed.*

degenerated to the positions of reformism. It adopted the Marxist-Leninist programme of struggle to overthrow the government of the landowners and capitalists and to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat as a weapon in the socialist transformation of society. During the elections to the leading party bodies Lenin's supporters received the majority vote (*bolshinstvo*), while the opportunists found themselves in the minority (*menshinstvo*). Hence, the names of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. In this way, the congress sealed the victory of Bolshevism over opportunism in the RSDLP ranks and dealt a severe blow at its advocates in international Social-Democracy.

The emergence of the Bolshevik Party in Russia raised the revolutionary movement of the working class against the exploiters to an historically new level. For the first time the proletariat was given an organisation capable of successfully guiding its struggle for its social emancipation, for socialism and communism in new historical conditions.

The Bolshevik Party developed on the basis of Lenin's ideological, political and organisational principles to become a powerful force transforming the world. During the many years of class battles it constantly improved its organisation, strategy and tactics, educated and steeled the proletariat as the predominant element in the emancipation movement, rallied round it the mass of the working people and led them through the crucible of three revolutions to the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which ushered in a new era in human history.

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The book deals with the little-studied early period of the CPSU history. It portrays the theory and practice of the Social-Democratic movement in the 1890s and examines a wide range of problems involved in the setting-in of the Leninist stage in Marxism. It also describes how, under Lenin's leadership, socialism was welded with the workers' movement and the proletarian party in Russia was founded.
